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Fabliaux or Tales

OF THE 12TH AND 13TH CENTURIES.

FABLIAUX OR TALES,
ABRIDGED FROM FRENCH MANUSCRIPTS
OF THE
XIIITH AND XIIIITH CENTURIES
BY M. LE GRAND,
SELECTED
AND TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH VERSE.
WITH
A PREFACE AND NOTES.



VOL. I.

LONDON:

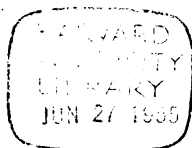
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SONNET TO G. E.

(TO WHOM THE TRANSLATOR IS INDEBTED FOR THE
PREFACE AND MANY OF THE NOTES TO THIS VOLUME.)

*THOU, gentle friend, hast spied me how I pac'd
Through strange delightful realms of Fairy-land,
And tangled arbours trimm'd with rustick hand,
And alleys green, for lack of tread grown waste :*

*Then be the labour thine, for thy command
Hath wray'd my homely deeds to nicer eyes,
Noting these scenes in long-past ages plann'd
To teach our courtly throng their brave device.*

*The mickle toil be thine, and thine the price ;
So I may roam, as likes my wandering vein,
To other bowers nigh lost in time's disguise,
And muse of loyal knights' and ladies' pain ;
And, as I search each desert dark recess,
Lament such change of fortune favourless.*

G. L. W.

SONNET TO THE REV. H. T. P.

(ON RECEIVING FROM HIM SOME TRANSCRIPTS, &c. OF WELCH
POETRY, SINCE INSERTED IN THE NOTES TO THIS VOLUME.)

*HENRY, by nature's hand in blood allied,
By many a link of kindred fancy join'd,
Fair fall the hour that first thy youth confin'd
To Cambrian wilds by Usk's romantick side!*

*There (with a pastor's duty well combin'd,
Rude flocks among, that know none other lore,)
Love for the muse of Wales impell'd thy mind,
And to thy search unvail'd her bards of yore.*

*Now, led by thee, my ravish'd eyes explore
Great Arthur's deeds embalm'd in Merlin's song,
Ken how his worthies strive in conflict sore,
And save their rescued fame from scepticks' wrong:
Hence! chilling doubt!—sustain'd by fairy hand
Still Arthur lives, to reign in Anglia's land!**

G. L. W.

* Alluding to the hexameter said to have been written on Arthur's tomb—

HIC IACET ARTHVRVS REX QVONDAM REXQVE FVTVRVS.

Or, as Lydgate gives it—

Thys Epitaphie recordeth so certeyne,

Here lieth King Arthur y^e shall reigne again.

PREFACE.

THE following Work is an attempt at a metrical translation of some Fabliaux, or French Tales, contained in the collection made by M. Le Grand, and first published in octavo; afterwards (in 1781) in five small volumes. The original compositions, of which this author has given us abridgments or extracts, being of the 12th and 13th centuries, are consequently anterior to our English historical ballads and metrical romances, of which they are probably the originals; and, being written in a language which at that period was common to France and England, may be considered as equally connected with the literary history of both countries.

A collection of Fabliaux was printed in 1756, from the manuscripts, in three small volumes, with a glossary to each; but even with this assistance they are so little intelligible to a modern Frenchman, that the work is said to be scarcely known, even among the learned, at Paris.

From one of these (that of 'Gombert et les deux Clercs') Chaucer is supposed to have taken his Reve's tale : another has had the honour of being adopted by Diderot, but in the hands of that learned academician has lost all its original archness and simplicity, and under the quaint title of 'les Bijoux Indiscrets,' exhibits a most deplorable mixture of dullness and profligacy. This collection is mentioned here because three of the following fabliaux ('the Lay of the little Bird,' 'the Priest who had a Mother in spite of himself,' and 'the Lay of Aristotle') are to be found in it : these may be consulted as a proof of the fidelity with which M. Le Grand has executed his abridgments.

He seems indeed to be fully aware of the importance of such fidelity. Works of fancy, written in remote ages, are the most authentick historical documents with respect to the manners and customs of the times in which they are composed. In compiling a chronicle of events, the monkish historians seem to have been only solicitous to record the progress or decay of religion, which they measured by the importance of the donations made to

their respective monasteries, or to the church in general. It was solely by such donations that the ignorant laity could merit the honourable mention of the learned: their manners, amusements, or occupations, were considered as unworthy of notice, or were only noticed to be involved in one general proscription; and hence it has happened that whatever information we possess with respect to the dark ages has been principally gleaned by modern sagacity from the laws and other public records of the times. But, in composing works of imagination, the monk is forced to look beyond the boundaries of his cloister, and to describe what passes in the world; his facts are false, but the manners he paints are true. Thus when Adam Davie (a poet of the 14th century cited by Mr. Warton) represents Pilate as challenging our Lord to single combat; or when, in *Pierce Plowman's Vision* (edit. 1550, fol. 98.) the person who pierced our Saviour's side is described as *a knight who came forth with a spear and jousted with Jesus*, we are very sure that the author has given to all his actors the opinions and habits that were generally prevalent amongst his cotemporaries. It was

in consequence of such reflections as these that M. de Paulmy first set on foot the well-known 'Bibliothèque des Romans,' containing extracts from all the classes in his vast library. It was intended as an amusing and instructive supplement to the graver history of each century; and, had the compilers continued true to their principles, had they been guided by the elegant and discriminating taste of the Comte de Tressan, it would doubtless have proved one of the most useful and entertaining productions of modern literature.

What has been just premised will in a great measure explain the intentions of the present translator. The authors of the *Cento Novelle Antiche*, Boccace, Bandello, Chaucer, Gower, in short the writers of all Europe, have probably made use of the inventions of the elder fablers. They have borrowed their general outlines, which they have filled up with colours of their own, and have exercised their ingenuity in varying the drapery, in combining the groups, and in forming them into more regular and animated pictures. Le Grand has given his authors in their native simplicity, and the present translator has

adhered to his original with the most scrupulous, and perhaps with a servile fidelity. In many places he has been even literally exact. From his anxiety to attain this object he has been induced to try an experiment, of the success of which he can only judge by the suffrages of his readers. Every one has observed that certain expressions become by habit appropriate to the modes of particular periods. Spenser and Sidney, who were familiar with the spirit of chivalry, and who described what they saw and felt, have transfused into their language the stateliness and courtesy of the gentle knights whom they painted; and a writer who should attempt to delineate the manners of the age in which they lived, would find it difficult to give life and spirit to his description without borrowing many of their expressions, for which no substitutes can be found in modern language, because the modes and customs to which they refer have long since grown obsolete. From the writers of this age therefore the translator has borrowed not only a variety of words, but, as far as he could, the general cast of their expression; and with a view to remedy any little

obscurity that might arise from this practice, he has given a short glossary at the end of the volume, to explain such words as may not be perfectly familiar to every reader. In short, he has endeavoured to adapt the colouring and costume of language to the manners he describes : to give an exact copy in miniature of the works of antiquated masters; not to rival or eclipse them by the superiour brilliancy of his tints, or by the nicer artifice of his composition.

M. Le Grand has prefixed to his work a long and elaborate, but desultory preface, in which he discusses the relative merits of the *Trouveurs* and *Troubadours* (the northern and southern French poets), with a degree of prolixity which would appear intolerable in a translation; and employs the most violent invectives against the English nation, whom he taxes with envy and arrogance, for having presumed to bestow on their countryman King Arthur, that pre-eminence among the heroes of romance which justly belonged to Charlemagne. Of the remainder of his preface, part is allotted to a description of the variations that have taken place in French

poetry; and part to an account of his materials, and of the difficulties he found in collating and digesting them. As none of these discussions were likely to interest in detail the readers of the following translations, it has been thought sufficient to preserve the principal facts and observations with which they were interspersed.

With a view to render his work more generally useful, M. Le Grand has added to each fabliau a variety of notes, explanatory of the private life, manners, and customs of the Europeans during the 12th and 13th centuries. These the translator has preserved; but he has taken the liberty of abridging them very considerably, and of entirely omitting such as appeared too trivial, or related exclusively to French antiquity: he has also frequently referred his readers to English instead of French examples; and has occasionally introduced additions of his own. Notes, however, are necessarily unconnected, and, had M. Le Grand been less anxious to establish the pretensions of his countrymen to priority of romantick invention, he would probably have employed some part of his preface in sketching a general outline of the picture to

which the separate parts might be referred, and particularly in tracing the rise and progress of chivalry, that leading institution of the dark ages, and which had an influence so considerable on manners and literature. The subject indeed has been often treated at large, but such a work as this is addressed to unlearned readers, who expect, and have a right to find, a short and intelligible narrative of whatever is necessary to the explanation of the work before them. This therefore will be attempted by the translator in the remainder of this preface.

Every one knows that on the decline of the Roman power, whatever remains of literature had survived the long reign of bad taste and superstition, were destroyed by the variety of barbarous nations who broke into the several provinces; and that during the 5th, 6th, and 7th centuries, all the inhabitants of Europe were plunged in the darkest ignorance, from which they are supposed to have gradually emerged in consequence of their intercourse with the Arabians. That extraordinary people,

whose religious zeal had prompted them to destroy the library of Alexandria, soon repented of their work, and became as anxious for the acquisition of learning as for enlargement of dominion. About the beginning of the 8th century, at which time they had spread themselves through Egypt and along the whole northern coast of Africa, and were become masters of the richest provinces of Spain, they appear on a comparison with the western Europeans as a civilized and polished people. They were the inventors of arithmetick in its present form, of algebra, and of chemistry; were considerable proficient in medicine and astronomy, and renewed in the west the knowledge of the best Greek authors, and particularly of Aristotle. It appears certain that the Jews, who were the principal channels of our literary as well as commercial intercourse with the Arabians, had introduced many of the learned works of that people into Europe before the age of Charlemagne; but it does not seem to be perfectly ascertained whether their poetry or their fictions were known to our ancestors before the time of the Crusades. Some criticks ascribe to the northern Scalds

that system of fairy mythology which others attribute to the Arabians; while Mr. Warton contends, that as the Goths themselves appear to have emigrated from the shores of the Caspian, we are in either case to consider fairies and dragons as of Asiatick origin. It is for the reader to determine whether this genealogy of fiction be well authenticated. A belief in supernatural agents seems to have prevailed in every age and country, and monsters of all sorts have been created by fear and exaggeration. Every child has trembled at the hideous voracity of the cannibal Ogres or Ougres, yet there is no evidence that the real Ougres, who were the Hungarian soldiers in Attila's army, were in the habit of eating children. It seems as natural that a belief in fairies should have preceded our intercourse with the Arabians, as that giants should have been imagined before the discovery of Patagonia. The snake and the lizard apparently comprise the analysis of a dragon; and since Europeans are as capable as Asiaticks of being frightened by such reptiles, they are probably not less likely to have furnished them with griping talons and wings as an excuse for their terror.

But whatever may be the extent of the advantages derived from an amicable intercourse with the Saracens, it is certain that their enmity effected a great change in the manners of Europe, by producing a complete revolution in the art of war; an event which could not be indifferent where every government reposed on a military basis. The cavalry of the Arabians, like that of their ancestors the Parthians, was extremely formidable; and the Franks, whose armies were composed solely of infantry, found it difficult to resist the attacks of so versatile an enemy, or even to derive any permanent advantage from success. The famous victory in 732 between Tours and Poitiers which gained to Charles the surname of Martel (the hammer), and in which he totally destroyed the Saracen camp, is said to have been as undecisive as it was bloody. From that period, therefore, he began to exert his utmost endeavour in forming a body of cavaliers or *knights*, and this favourite project was prosecuted with no less ardour by his successors. In four and twenty years from the above date, the French cavalry was already become very numerous, since we are told that in 756 Pepin convoked

the annual assembly of the states at Compiègne, not in the month of March as was the ancient custom, but in May; because, these assemblies being held immediately before they took the field, it was necessary that they should wait till their cavalry could be provided with a sufficiency of forage. The same attention to the cavalry continued through the succeeding reigns, and the infantry of Europe fell into entire disrepute till the beginning of the 16th century.

Some writers have attributed the institution of knight-hood to Charles Martel, who, as they tell us, created thirteen knights after his victory near Poitiers: others, on the authority of Cassiodorus, carry it up to the time of Theodoric. We might with equal justice ascribe it to the Romans, who, from the beginning of their republick, had an equestrian order: but it is useless to look for the precise date of an institution which was matured and perfected gradually, as well by the vicissitudes of government, as by the increase of superstition.

We know that among the Germans, and probably among the other northern tribes, the first assumption of

arms was attended with certain ceremonies; and it is likely that on the first formation of a body of cavalry, the candidates for a command in that favourite corps might receive their spurs, as the young Germans received their swords, with some degree of solemnity. But no particular oaths or religious obligations seem to have been imposed, nor indeed were they necessary, as military discipline and obedience were already secured by the constitution of the state. The Franks may be considered as an army quartered throughout Gaul: every soldier, in lieu of pay, had a portion of land originally allotted to him, by which tenure he had an interest in the preservation of the conquest. The sovereign, whose share was much more than sufficient for his own maintenance, granted out, to those in whom he particularly confided, certain benefices or fiefs, and these being resumable at pleasure, sufficiently ensured the fidelity and obedience of those on whom they were conferred. It was in this way that the French monarchs seem to have made provision for their new body of knights or horsemen, and the allotment to each knight appears to have been con-

siderable. The Normans are known to have copied pretty exactly the old French institutions, and under our Norman kings a knight's fee was of about £ 20. annual value, which is equal to a rent of £ 300. of our present money.

The reign of Charlemagne offers an event which is very lightly mentioned by historians, but forms a most important epocha in the legends of romance. In the year 778 the French monarch undertook an expedition into Spain, which terminated in the capture of Saragossa. In returning through the Pyrenees the rear of his army was attacked by the Gascons, and many of his principal officers, hastening to the place to rally the troops, were slain. This was the famous defeat at the valley of Roncevaux, and here fell the peerless Rolland, the pretended cousin of Charlemagne and favourite hero of Boiardo and Ariosto, of whom however history only records that he commanded a body of troops on the frontier of Brittany. Near the place Charlemagne caused a chapel to be erected, having under it a large, strong, and beautiful vault, with thirty tombs of white stone, but without any inscriptions.

The succeeding kings of France did not inherit either the undivided empire, or the talents, of Charlemagne. By degrees, possession was supposed to confer a right to property of every kind; and fiefs, and even dignities, became hereditary. In the beginning of the 10th century, under the reign of Charles the Simple, the titles of Duke, Count, and Marquis, had entirely lost their original signification; and every baron, assuming whatever title he thought proper, became the uncontrolled and independent tyrant of his domains. Their country seats grew up into citadels, at all times occupied by a garrison; and as the feudal securities of fealty and allegiance were found insufficient to secure obedience, the aid of superstition became necessary, and the knight or soldier was attached by the most solemn oaths and ceremonies to the person of his sovereign or superiour lord. Hence the monarchs of those times, though extremely formidable to foreign enemies, against whom they could direct the whole force of the nation, were often unsuccessful in their disputes with their own immediate vassals, in which they were able to employ those warriors only whom they might

have attracted to their standard by their talents or their liberality. Such a state of things necessarily produced and gave importance to the order of knighthood; and as anarchy continued to increase till at length it became intolerable to all, as the state possessed no power of coercion, and even superstition, omnipotent as it was in many cases, was a feeble barrier against the excesses of that military age, it became necessary to form a code of honour, to supply the want of jurisprudence and morals; and the security of the crown, the execution of justice, the protection of religion and the laws, and the redress of all injuries, particularly of those offered to women or orphans, were entrusted to the valour of the knights, and formed the sacred obligation which they contracted by their oath of admission into the order.

The reader who is accustomed to the regularity of civilized life cannot survey without astonishment the detail of confusion that prevailed in those times of feudal barbarism. The universal fondness for the pleasures of the chace, and the general contempt for agriculture, had converted a considerable part of Europe into forests; and

the same solitude which gave an asylum to the beasts of the field, afforded security to large bands of robbers, who were generally sure of purchasing, by a participation of their plunder, the protection and assistance of the little tyrants in their neighbourhood. At every bridge, and on every road, enormous tolls were exacted; and passengers were often plundered by the Castellains through whose territories they passed. Small armies, under the command of their condottieri, wandered over Europe, ready to engage in any service, and in the mean time pillaging all parties. These indeed were almost unknown in England, except during the troublesome reign of Stephen, who took into pay a troop of these land-pirates from the Ardennes, under the name of Brabanter; but our robbers were neither less numerous nor less insolent than those on the continent. Peter, king of Cyprus and Jerusalem, who visited England in 1363, was robbed on the highway. In 1316 two cardinals, with a large escort led by the Bishop of Durham and his brother Lord Beaumont, were attacked near Darlington, and the bishop and his brother were taken prisoners, and confined

till they had paid their ransome. Even in the reign of the active and powerful Edward the First, the town of Boston was assaulted in 1285, during the time of the fair, and completely pillaged by a band of robbers. The wealth, power, and abilities of our first Norman kings, enabled them to form a strong government in England, when other countries were in a state of anarchy: but the preceding examples shew what was the state of the rest of Europe at an earlier period. Anarchy was the universal evil, and knighthood was the remedy opposed to it: we are even told by Bettinelli (*Risorgimento d'Italia*, part 2d, page 259, note) that knights were sometimes created by republics, and swore fealty to the state as their sovereign.

It is evident that the performance of the many and hazardous duties imposed on the candidates for knighthood required an uncommon degree of valour, strength, and dexterity. Accordingly their education was long and severe: at seven years of age the noble children were usually removed from their father's house to the court or castle of their future patron, and placed under the care of a governor, who taught them the first articles

of religion, respect and reverence to their lords and superiours, and initiated them in the ceremonies of a court. They were called *pages*, *valets*, or *varlets*, and their office was to carve, to wait at table, and to perform other menial services which were not then considered as humiliating. At their leisure hours they learnt to dance and play on the harp; were instructed in the *mysteries of woods and rivers*, that is to say, in hunting, falconry, and fishing; and in wrestling, tilting with spears, and performing other military exercises on horseback. At fourteen, the page became an esquire, and began a course of severer and more laborious exercises. To vault on a horse in heavy armour, to run, to scale walls, and spring over ditches under the same incumbrance, to wrestle, to wield the battle-axe for a length of time without raising the visor or taking breath, to perform with grace all the evolutions of the manage, and to rehearse the various labours of a real battle, were necessary preliminaries to the reception of knighthood, which was usually conferred at twenty-one years of age, when education was supposed to be completed. In the mean time, beside a variety of other occu-

pations, the esquires, whose particular charge it was to do the *honours of the court*, were no less assiduously engaged in acquiring all those refinements of civility which formed what was in that age called *courtesy*, the distinctive character of noble birth. The same castle in which these candidates for knighthood received their education, was usually thronged with young persons of the other sex, and the page was encouraged at a very early period to select some lady of the court as the mistress of his heart, to whom he was taught to refer all his sentiments, words, and actions. Thus the strongest passion of the human breast was so directed as to exert all its witcheries in the cause of virtue. The service of his mistress was the glory and occupation of a knight : her image had taken root in his heart amidst the fairy scenes of childhood, and was blended with every recollection of that age of innocence ; and her caresses, bestowed at once by affection and gratitude, were held out as the recompence of his well-directed valour. Mahomet was unable to find in Asiatick manners so powerful a source of enthusiasm.

To the possession of all that adorns and sweetens life

religion added the promise of pure and unceasing happiness hereafter. The holy wars broke out and produced the golden age of chivalry ; and the order of knighthood, endowed with all the sanctity and religious awe that attended the priesthood, became an object of ambition to the greatest sovereigns.

At a time when chivalry excited universal admiration, and when all the efforts of that chivalry were directed against the enemies of religion, it was natural that literature should receive the same impulsion, and that history and fable should be ransacked to furnish examples of courage and piety that might excite increased emulation. Arthur and Charlemagne were the two heroes selected for this purpose. Arthur's pretensions were, that he was a Christian, and certainly a brave, though not always a successful warrior : he had withstood with great resolution the arms of the infidels, that is to say of the Saxons, and his memory was held in the highest estimation by his countrymen the Britons, who carried with them into Wales, and into the kindred country of Armorica or Bretany, the memory of his exploits, which their na-

tional vanity insensibly exaggerated, till the little Prince of the Silures (South Wales including Herefordshire) was magnified into the conqueror of England, of Gaul, and of the greater part of Europe. When a hero becomes the popular theme of poetical composition, he will soon be adorned with the aggregate merits of many cotemporary warriors; and it is probable that Arthur inherited every unclaimed panegyrick that was to be found in the fragments of Welsh poetry. His genealogy was gradually carried up to an imaginary Brutus, and to the period of the Trojan war; and a sort of chronicle was composed in the Welsh or Armorican language, which, under the pompous title of the History of the Kings of Britain, was brought over from Bretany about the year 1100, by Gualter or Walter Mapes, Archdeacon of Oxford, and communicated to Geoffrey of Monmouth, who translated it into Latin, though not without many additions and alterations. From Latin it was translated into French by Wistace or Eustace, in the year 1155, under the title of ' Brut d'Angleterre;' was continued by Robert Wace (who, after all, was also very probably the genuine Wis-

tace, see Tyrwhitt's Essay on Chaucer, note 47), chaplain to our Henry the Second, and canon of Bayeux in 1160; under the title of 'Roman de Rou;' rendered into Saxon by Layamon; and at last exhibited in English verse by Robert of Gloucester, and by Robert Manning otherwise called Robert de Brunne, about the beginning of the 14th century.

As to Charlemagne, though his real merits were sufficient to secure his immortality, it was impossible that his *holy wars* against the Saracens should not become a favourite topick for fiction. Accordingly the fabulous history of these wars was written, probably towards the close of the 11th century, by a monk, who thinking it would add dignity to his work to embellish it with a contemporary name, boldly ascribed it to Turpin, who was Archbishop of Rheims about the year 773. This is the book so frequently quoted by Ariosto.

These fabulous chronicles, however, were for a while imprisoned in languages of local only, or of professional, access. Both Turpin and Geoffrey might indeed be studied by ecclesiasticks, the sole Latin scholars of those times;

and Geoffrey's British original would contribute to the gratification of Welshmen; but neither could become extensively popular till translated into some tongue of general and familiar circulation. The Anglo-Saxon was at this time used only by a conquered and enslaved nation: the Spanish and Italian languages were not yet formed: the French alone was spoken or understood by the nobility in the greatest part of Europe, and therefore was a proper vehicle for the new mode of composition.

The French language was divided into two dialects, both of which bore the name of *Romane* or *Romance*, because each was formed on the basis of the Latin; the northern being adulterated by a mixture of Frankish and Norman words, and the southern by those of the Ostrogoths, Visigoths, and Alani. The river Loire was their common boundary. In the provinces to the south of that river, the affirmative *yes* was expressed by the word *oc*, in the north it was called *oil* (*oui*), and hence Dante has named the southern language *langue d'oc*, and the northern *langue d'oïl*. The latter, which was carried into England, Sicily, &c. by the Normans, and is the origin of

the present French, may be called *French Romane*; and the former *Provençal* or *Provencial Romane*, because it was spoken by the subjects of Raimond Count of Provence, who were known in the European armies during the Crusades by the general name of Provençals or Provencials.

These dialects were soon distinguished by very opposite characters. A soft and enervating climate, a spirit of commerce encouraged by an easy communication with other maritime nations, the influx of wealth, and a more settled government, may have tended to polish and soften the diction of the Provencials, whose poets, under the name of Troubadours, were the masters of the Italians, and particularly of Petrarch. Their favourite compositions were *Sirventes*, (satirical pieces), love-songs, and *tensons*, which last may be considered as *pleas for the courts of love*. The reader knows that, in the times of chivalry, passion was sublimed into a science, and that the conduct of young lovers, instead of being abandoned to the blind guidance of instinct, was subjected to a regular code of amorous jurisprudence. Every difficult and

delicate question was discussed in the *courts of love* with the greatest solemnity, and with all the abstractions of metaphysical refinement; and it is probable that the disputes on these subjects would have produced as many heresies in love as in religion, but that the judgment-seat in the tribunals was filled by ladies, whose decision was very properly admitted to be final and absolute. It should seem that the Provençials were so completely absorbed in these abstract speculations, as to neglect and despise the composition of fabulous histories, only four of which are attributed to the Troubadours, and even these are rather legends of devotion than of chivalry. On this ground M. Le Grand contends that these boasted *inventors* notwithstanding their proficiency in the *gai saber* (gay science) have discovered very little gaiety or invention. But this is much too hasty a decision. The Troubadours were highly admired by their contemporaries; and candour requires that we should pay much deference to their judgment. The manners they painted seem extraordinary, but they were real. The passion with which Laura inspired their imitator Petrarch ap-

pears to us to be neither love nor friendship, nor jest nor earnest: but it is surely less strange than that of the Troubadour Geoffrey Rudel for the Countess of Tripoli, whom he had never seen. He became (says Mr. Warton) enamoured from imagination; embarked for Tripoli; fell sick during the voyage through the fever of expectation; and was brought on shore half expiring. The Countess, having heard the news of the arrival of this gallant stranger, hastened to the shore, and took him by the hand; he opened his eyes, and at once overpowered by disease and gratitude, had just time to say inarticulately, that having seen her he died satisfied. The Countess caused him to be magnificently buried among the Knights Templars, was seized with a profound melancholy, and turned nun. Poets of this description cannot be judged by ordinary rules; and a lover who fairly and honestly dies for the charms of an imaginary mistress, must be permitted to express in his own way such sensations as common language was certainly never intended to describe. In defence of the monotony of their pastoral poetry it may be observed, that a pas-

toral can only subsist by the charms of harmonious numbers and picturesque diction; merits which cannot be properly estimated by those who view it through the medium of a translation. These metaphorical flowers are of all flowers the most tender, and the least capable of being transplanted without losing their native freshness and fragrance. Amorous and despairing shepherds must not be compared with the knights and fairies of Ariosto: these are robust beings calculated for every soil and climate, and so vivacious that (as Spenser has shewn us) they can still please, though stiffened and congealed by the chilling influence of allegory.

But whatever may be the merit of the Troubadours, M. Le Grand is apparently justified in contending that their language was by no means so generally diffused, nor so well calculated to give popularity and celebrity to the fabulous heroes, as the French Romane. This, which had begun to be fashionable in England before the Conquest, became, after that event, the only language used at the court of London; it was familiarly known at Naples, Sicily, and Florence, at Constantinople, and in

the greater part of Greece, and was established by the Crusaders in their kingdoms of Cyprus and Jerusalem : and, as the various conquests of the Normans, and the enthusiastick valour of that extraordinary people, had familiarized the minds of men with the most marvellous events ; the French writers eagerly seized the fabulous legends of Arthur and Charlemagne, translated them into the vulgar tongue, and soon produced a variety of imitations. Hercules, Theseus, Jason, and the other fabulous heroes of Greece, are supposed to have distinguished themselves nearly in the same manner as our knights-errant, by destroying monsters and giants, and succouring the oppressed. Hector, and his brother-warriours, whose exploits were less marvellous, were however great favourites in the middle ages, because it was become fashionable among the European nations to claim their descent from Troy, after the example of Rome. Alexander the Great enjoyed among the Asiaticks the same sort of reputation as Orlando possessed in Europe. Many or all of these heroes therefore, being enlisted, as occasion might require, into the order of knighthood, and perhaps, by the

help of a few anachronisms, introduced into the company of each other, were celebrated by the Trouveurs in their legends; and, together with the stories of Renaud de Montauban, Ogier le Danois, the imaginary families of Amadis and others, Richard Cœur de Lion and the heroes of the Crusades, composed by degrees that formidable body of marvellous histories, which from the dialect in which the most ancient of them were written were called *Romances*.

Though the early metrical compositions were upon the whole much shorter than the prose histories into which they were dilated during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, they were still so long that only extracts from them could conveniently be repeated at the festivals of the barons, or even retained by the minstrels, whose office it was to declaim them. In the pure ages of chivalry it is well known that the art of reading formed no part of a knight's accomplishments; the learned and unlearned parts of mankind were completely separated, and though the former did not always possess the knowledge to which they pretended, the latter were perfectly sincere

in their professions of ignorance. And as the whole body of knights could not be constantly employed in war, nor in quest of adventures, nor in tournaments, nor even in the amusements of the chace; and as no men could be less patient under the listlessness attendant on inactivity; the Trouveurs or poets, (or, to adopt an old English expression, the *makers*,) together with their attendant minstrels, who were instructed in musick and the art of declamation, were very necessary to the festivity of a baron's table. In earlier times they had probably composed and taught to their heroes those warlike songs which even before the age of Charlemagne formed the delight of a military nobility. By degrees they introduced greater diversity into their compositions, and formed *dits* (ditties or moral songs), *ballads*, *complaints*, *roundelays*, and *virelays*, of which there were many varieties, and lastly *fabliaux* and *lays*, which perhaps only differed from each other by some peculiarity in their musical accompaniments. Of these tales, some appear to have been founded on domestic stories or national traditions, and others were perhaps imported after the Crusades from Greece or Arabia. Some

were romances in miniature, filled with fairies, dwarfs, giants, monsters, and tournaments; of which we have an example in the tale of 'the Mule without a Bridle;' some were tales of love and gallantry, and some of devotion. The only object of the poet was to amuse his audience, and he attained his object either by reciting the lives of saints, or the wonders of chivalry, or the scandalous adventures of the neighbourhood.

It is natural that hearers so little accustomed to the artifice of composition should not be very fastidious critics; but in perusing the original fabliaux it is impossible to repress our astonishment at the indelicate and gross language to which our ancestors of both sexes appear to have listened without the least scruple or emotion. It is true, that opinions respecting decorum may vary considerably in different ages, without indicating a correspondent alteration in morals. 'In a play or mystery of the Old and New Testament acted at Ghester in 1327, Adam and Eve (says Mr. Warton) were both exhibited on the stage naked, and conversing about their nakedness: this very pertinently introduces the next

scene, in which they have coverings of fig-leaves. This extraordinary spectacle was beheld by a numerous assembly of both sexes with great composure: they had the authority of Scripture for such a representation, and they gave matters just as they found them in the third chapter of Genesis.' Such spectacles, however, may indicate the simplicity rather than the libertinism of the age in which they were exhibited; and it is possible that the necessity of veiling those living statues may have been suggested by the irritable imagination of prudery, rather than by any alarms they occasioned to artless and unsuspecting innocence. The same excuse may apply to the grossness of antiquated language. The distinction between modesty of thought, and decency which resides in the expression, is a modern refinement; a compromise between chastity and seduction, which stipulates not the exclusion, but only the disguise of licentiousness; and may perhaps be a proof of a purer taste, but is no evidence of a very severe and rigid morality. Unfortunately, however, it is not the language only, but the whole tendency of many of the *fabliaux*, which is highly repre-

hensible; and indeed from almost all the literary productions of those simple ages it appears, that if continence was highly venerated, it was partly on account of its extreme scarcity. Queen Guenever is a well-known, but by no means a solitary instance of female frailty; and from the general conduct of the heroines of romance, we should almost be led to suspect, that passing their lives in the constant dread of violation, they would have thought themselves criminally prodigal of their resources had they employed against a lover those means of defence which might at every moment become necessary for their resisting an unwelcome and brutal ravisher. M. Le Grand observes with great surprise, that even in *le Castoiment* (a work on education), and in the Chevalier de la Tour's *Instructions to his Daughters*, the tales by which their precepts are exemplified are not more edifying than the most licentious productions of the Trouvres: and this too at a time when ladies were the supreme arbiters of taste, and guardians of national manners.

It is evident however that this evil was one of the

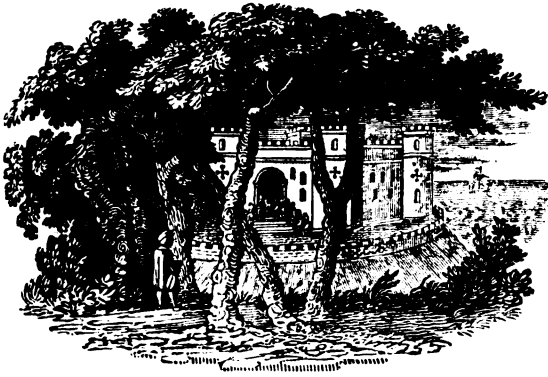
many mischiefs resulting from anarchy, a monster, which (like the Blatant Beast in Spenser) neither the arts of female elegance nor the arms of chivalry could soften or subdue. The laws were silent or impotent; the professors of religion were either themselves ignorant, or being immersed in the refinements of scholastick learning, and in disputes about the dogmas of Christianity, neglected to inculcate the plain and practical code of Christian morality, whose silent but certain influence could alone have meliorated the perversity of general habits. From the want of this principle of attraction to modify the impulse of the passions, and to retain the different classes of society in their proper orbits, the many examples of exalted virtue which those ages really produced, were regarded only as brilliant eccentricities of conduct: they appeared like the comets of the system, they were gazed at with surprise, but their influence was insensible.

From the account that has been given of the fabliaux, it is evident that they were perfectly unfit to be presented in their original state to modern readers. Some indeed were so faulty, that M. Le Grand was constrained to

suppress them as quite incorrigible : almost all required considerable omissions ; and the compression of their style, which was pretty universally lax and diffuse. He trusted, however, that without altering their character, these might still be rendered worthy of the publick favour ; and the present translator, by restoring to them metrical form and antiquated language, has endeavoured to give them the graces of originality. The oblivion to which they have been so long condemned, was produced rather by the vicissitudes of fashion than by their own demerits ; they were eclipsed by the more brilliant fictions of chivalry, and these were in their turn forgotten when the disuse of tournaments consigned the nobility of Europe to repose and indolence. During this stagnation of amusement arose the *heroick romances*, the *Cassandras* and *Clelias*, which breathe tedium and torpor in every page, and which instead of restless knights constantly pursuing a mistress or fighting a rival, present to us respectful but languid lovers, lamenting the rigours of a sex who were forced to regret even the enterprising petulance of their former admirers, when they found the dangers of a siege

exchanged for the listless monotony of a blockade. These were followed by translations and imitations of Arabian and other Asiatick fictions, by fairy tales, by philosophical romances, and lastly by novels. With these more finished productions of a polished age it is not the intention of the translator to compare his *Fabliaux* : he offers them as the first rude essays in a species of composition which the pedantry of criticism has vainly attempted to discredit, which has employed the pens of a Richardson and a Fielding, and in which many female writers of the present day have successfully blended the allurements of fiction with much useful instruction and pure morality.

Lucassin and Nicolette.



AUCASSIN AND NICOLETTE.

WHAT wight is he that fain would now be told
Of rare adventures fallen in days of old?—
Sweet verse I sing, and goodly deeds I tell,
Of a young pair that lov'd each other well:
Young were they both, in love their hearts were met, 5
Their names were Aucassin and Nicolette.
All that the youth assay'd, by day or night,
For his sweet maid, with skin like lily white,
And all his prowesses, and all his pains,
The fruitful compass of my tale contains. 10
So chaste, so cheerful, their love's strain doth flow,
No wight so sad but this must wake from wo;
No wight, though stretch'd upon his bed he lie,
With pain distraught, or worn with malady,

But, while he hears, shall quick recovery meet, 15
So touching is the tale, so passing sweet.

Ten livelong years exterminating war
Had scourg'd the afflicted lands of waste Beaucaire ;
And to the city gates, the last defence,
In arms the stern Count Bongars of Valence 20
Led on his host : each rising sun beheld
An hundred knights well marshall'd in the field :
These, with a thousand of mix'd foot and horse,
Stretch'd all around with unresisted force,
Wide o'er the ravag'd p'lains their fury pour'd, 25
And smote the offenceless vassals with the sword ;
While, bow'd with years, Count Garins' faltering might
Shrunk from the storm of foes, and shunn'd the fight.

One son he had, Aucassin was his name,
Of power to vindicate his father's fame ; 30
For large of size he was, his limbs well set,
Stout manliness with wondrous beauty met :
But will was wanting. Love, whom all obey,
Rul'd o'er his heart with undivided sway ;
Tourney's he heeded not, nor war's emprise, 35
His soul's desire one lovely maid supplies.

Full many a time his sire, with language kind,
And his fond mother, sought to move his mind :

- ‘ Arm, dearest son !’ they cried, ‘ ascend thy steed,
‘ And bear strong succour in this hour of need : 40
‘ Haste to our scatter’d vassals, head their host,
‘ And stay these spoilers ere our all be lost ;
‘ Might to his men a warring chieftain gives ;
‘ So shall they guard their homes, their wealth, their lives.’
‘ My sire !’ the love-lost youth would answer still, 45
‘ Thou know’st already my unshaken will.
‘ May heaven still mar my hopes, reject my prayer,
‘ If girded sword these limbs be seen to bear,
‘ If steed be cross’d, if earthly power incite
‘ This hand to join in tourney or in fight, 50
‘ Ere to my arms my mistress thou impart ;
‘ Sweet Nicolette ! the mistress of my heart !’
‘ Fair son of mine !’ rejoin’d the mournful sire,
‘ Ne’er may I yield to such uncouth desire :
‘ High blood is thine, and lineage undefil’d ; 55
‘ She, bought of Saracens, a captive child :
‘ My vassal, Viscount of Beaucaire, who paid
‘ The paltry purchase of this paynim maid,
‘ Who when he caus’d her since to be baptiz’d
‘ Stood sponsor too, hath well her weal aviz’d, 60
‘ And means fit spousal with some sturdy hind ;
‘ And the plough’s toil their needful food shall find.

'Thou, if the marriage state be deem'd so bless'd,
 'To counts, to kings, may'st bear thy just request;
 'View France throughout; there seek thy nuptial joys; 65
 'There lives no lord so proud to slight thy choice:
 'Where-e'er we sue, the sire, whoe'er he be,
 'Will hold him honour'd in a son like thee.'
 'Ah, father mine!' young Aucassin replied,
 'Where through the world's wide waste may be descried 70
 'County or realm, that were not well appay'd
 'If Nicolette were there, my lovely maid!'

The sire, unmov'd, his former word maintain'd,
 And the good Countess pray'd, and threaten'd, and complain'd;
 But prayers or threatenings answer none might meet 75
 Save this alone—'My Nicolette so sweet!
 'So simply beautiful! so courtly kind!
 'She ravishes my heart, she fills my mind.
 'So sweet my Nicolette!—if life abide,
 'Her love I needs must win, and she shall be my bride.' 80

The pensive sire, who now despair'd to move
 His son's fix'd purpose to prevail in love,
 His vassal Viscount that same hour assay'd,
 And call'd quick exile down upon the maid.
 Sway'd by his fears, howe'er he blam'd the deed, 85
 The yielding vassal the hard doom decreed,

And vow'd quick exile to some distant shore,
So strange, her name should ne'er be heard of more.
Yet for his heart belied his harsher tongue,
And the poor child was innocent and young, 90
And for he loved her, and abhorr'd the lot
Of punishment should fall where guilt was not ;
He meant some place, from sight of man retir'd,
Should stead that banishment his lord requir'd.

In the top story of his palace tower 95
The builder had devis'd one lonely bower ;
Its single window, small, and scant of light,
O'erlook'd a garden fair, that cheer'd the gazer's sight :
To this small room the Viscount turn'd his mind,
Here well he thought the maid might be confin'd : 100
Hard-by abundant stores his kindness plac'd
Of all things needful for frail nature's waste ;
Then to a matron, grave with length of days,
He gave the child, with charge to answer for her ways.

Fair flaxen locks sweet Nicolette did grace, 105
Fair crisped locks, sweet symmetry of face ;
Small were her teeth, and delicately white,
And her blue eyes with laughing lustre bright ;
Then for her slender waist, it might be spann'd,
E'en with the narrow circle of your hand ; 110

And her clear skin such freshness did adorn,
'Twas like the rosebud at the peep of morn ;
And of a comely smallness, and of hue
More red than summer's ripening cherries shew,
Were her twain lips ; while through her robe below 115
Two dainty apples rose, but whiter than the snow :
Such was her form : to sum up all in one,
A maid so sweet your eyes have never known.

Soon as her doom this hapless orphan spied,
To the small casement with quick step she hied, 120
And o'er the garden cast her wishful sight,
All gay with flowers it seem'd, a garden of delight ;
On every spray the merry birds did sing,
And hail'd the season's prime with fluttering wing :
' Ah ! wo is me ! ' she cried, ' in doleful cheer ; 125
' Lo here I bide ! for ever prison'd here !—
' Sweet love ! sweet Aucassin ! for thee confin'd !
' For that dear love which fills our mutual mind !—
' Yet shall their deeds ne'er shake my constant will,
' For I am true of heart, and bent to love thee still.' 130

The folk meanwhile, who all, though none knew where,
Saw Nicolette was absent from Beaucaire,
Whene'er they met, their various thoughts compar'd,
And argued how perchance the maid had far'd.

Some ween'd her fled, while others rumour'd rife 135
Count Garins sure had practis'd on her life :

I wot not if one single heart were glad,
Poor Aucassin's, past doubt, was hopeless sad ;
Soon to the Viscount, wo-begone, he hied,
And claim'd his beauteous maid, his plighted bride. 140

' All that I loved ! ' he cried with piteous tone,
' My world's best dearest treasure !—she is gone !
' Hast thou bereft me thus ?—my parting breath
' Calls out on thee, the authour of my death.'

Awhile the Viscount hop'd, and vainly strove 145
To waken shame for such inglorious love :
But, while he spake, Aucassin's kindling eye
Flash'd with much ire, and told such hatred nigh,
That, sway'd by prudence, sadly thus in brief
He shew'd the harsh commandment of his chief: 150

' Young friend ! ' he said, ' give bootless passion o'er :
' Thine eyes must gaze on Nicolette no more.
' Be resolute, and wisely bear thy lot,
' That thy sire deem the luckless maid forgot ;
' Else, uncontroll'd in wrath, too sure I read 155
' Some direful ruin bursting on thy head ;
' E'en on myself perchance the storm will fall,
' And thy dear damsel !—thou the cause of all !

‘ Wrought up to madness, thine imperious sire
‘ May doom us both to dreadful death by fire.’ 160
Heart-struck, Aucassin heard ; then wildly turn’d
Swift to his home, and thus in secret mourn’d.
‘ Sweet Nicolette !’ he cried, ‘ my mild, my meek !
‘ So sweet whene’er you smile, whene’er you speak ;
‘ So sweet to kiss, and to embrace so sweet ; 165
‘ Own sister mine—we never more may meet !
‘ Here, all forlorn, bide I :—here yet I breathe :—
‘ Soon, soon I trust, to quench despair in death !’

While thus young Aucassin, of grief the prey,
Wept all the vigour of his life away, 170
The stout Count Bongars, bent to end the war,
Girt, strait and sore, the castle of Beaucaire ;
To each brave knight had now assign’d his post,
And to the storm led on his dreadless host.
Within too, knights and squires, a gallant band, 175
Throng’d round the gates and walls were seen to stand ;
Bold burghers, mounted on the embattled towers,
Hurl’d sharpen’d stakes, and shot down arrowy showers ;
Yet lack’d there still some chief’s approved might
To animate their deeds, and rule the fight. 180

Dismay’d, Count Garins hasten’d to his son ;
‘ Base wretch !’ he cried, ‘ e’en now the gates are won,

- ‘ And thou sit’st tamely here ! to see thy land
‘ Waste all and captiv’d by the foeman’s hand ?—
‘ These castle walls—this last resource to see 185
‘ Storm’d all and lost ?—then what remains to thee ?—
‘ Rouse, dearest son, thy warrior steed ascend,
‘ Thy vassals cheer, thy heritage defend :
‘ E’en though thy craven soul refuse to fight,
‘ Thy presence shall confirm thy followers’ might ; 190
‘ On to the foe the elated bands will throng,
‘ And bear resistless victory along.’
‘ My sire,’ young Aucassin return’d in haste,
‘ Spare vain remonstrance, for my word is past.
‘ Heaven instant punish me, if e’er I go, 195
‘ Or change one stroke in combat with a foe,
‘ Till to my arms thou Nicolette impart,
‘ Sweet Nicolette ! the mistress of my heart !’
‘ Son,’ quoth the Count, ‘ I liefer far desire
‘ To see all lost :’—he spoke, and turn’d in ire. 200
‘ Yet stay, yet stay !’ young Aucassin rejoin’d,
‘ And let this proffer please my father’s mind :
‘ E’en now in arms I seek the mortal strife,
‘ So thou declare, should heaven preserve my life,
‘ Back when I speed victorious from the war 205
‘ These eyes shall once again behold my fair ;

‘ My fair sweet Nicolette, my heart’s delight,
‘ Once, only once, again shall bless my sight ;
‘ Hear one kind speech, receive one parting kiss,—
‘ Lo, now I arm, so thou but grant me this.’ 210
‘ So be it then;’ the aged Count rejoin’d:
‘ Herein I vow to grant thee all thy mind.’
Briefly he spoke, and scarce his speech was done
Ere Aucassin was dight, with hauberk on ;
Then, mounted on a strong and fiery steed, 215
With beamy lance in hand, and helmed head,
The opening gates let forth the impatient boy,
Fill’d with fond dreams of love, and wild delirious joy.

So rapt he was, so every sense was set
On the near hope to meet his Nicolette, 220
As one sans eyes, sans ears, he prick’d along
In the thick fight, nor mark’d the hostile throng,
Till close begirt, while loud on every side
‘ Lo here the youthful Aucassin !’ they cried,
His shield, his lance, pluck’d forcefully away, 225
He wak’d at last, to turn the fortune of the day :
Now right, now left, he whirls his sword on high,
And heads, hands, arms, in mingled ruin fly :
So in some forest wild a salvage boar
By baying dogs assail’d, and harass’d sore, 230

Where-e'er he turns, makes fearful waste around,
And wide with gore defiles the hostile ground.
Seven doughty knights he wounded, ten he slew,
And hew'd at length his desperate passage through ;
Then at full speed press'd onwards o'er the plain, 235
And sought Beaucaire's embattled towers again.

Just then Count Bongars heard the shouts from far
Of—' Aucassin the captive of the war !'
And hasting through the hôt promiscuous fray,
Came up to share the triumph of the day : 240
Him spied the youth, and dealt so dire a blow
On his proud helm, as laid the warrior low ;
Then by the nasal seis'd, and firmly held,
He furious drags him o'er the bloody field,
On to Beaucaire's high walls exultant hies, 245
And to Count Garins bears the glorious prize.
' My sire,' he cries, ' behold Valence's chief !
' Dire cause of ten years misery and grief.'—
' Ah, gallant son !' the joyful sire replied,
' Thus, thus becomes thy manhood to be tried ; 250
' Thus should the land recount thy conquests o'er,
' Thy love's inglorious folly nam'd no more.'
' Spare your remarks,' young Aucassin rejoin'd,
' And let your plighted faith employ your mind :

- ‘ I well remember, if my sire forget ; 255
‘ And claim sweet sight of long-lost Nicolette.’
‘ Boy!’ quoth the Count, ‘ no further tempt mine ire ;—
‘ Now were she here, to dreadful death by fire
‘ Far liefer would I straight that giglet cast ;
‘ Else let these words I utter be my last.’ 260
‘ Say’st thou!’ the son replies, ‘ my heart doth quail
‘ When such foul falsehoods in old age prevail!
‘ —Count of Valence, thou stand’st my prisoner there—
‘ Give me thine hand, and hence for ever swear
‘ To work this father’s wo, whene’er thou may’st, 265
‘ By thee still harm’d, afflicted, and disgrac’d.’—
‘ Sir!’ quoth Count Bongars, ‘ war’s disastrous hour
‘ Hath cast my lot within my foeman’s power ;
‘ Name ransome as you list ;—gold, silver bright,
‘ Palfreys, or dogs, or falcons train’d to flight ; 270
‘ Or choose you sumptuous furs, of vair, or gray ;
‘ I plight my faith the destin’d price to pay :
‘ But, pray you, scoff not ! mockery pray you spare
‘ Of one whose fall is nigh too great to bear.’
‘ Nay, argue not !’ with interruption rude 275
Young Aucassin exclaim’d in furious mood,
‘ But shape thee to my will, or thou art slain
‘ E’en as thou speak’st, down cloven to thy brain.’

Dismay'd, Count Bongars urg'd his suit no more,
But vow'd each needful malediction o'er ; 280
Then, by his conqueror led, he sought the plain,
And hail'd his late-lost liberty again.

What hence befalls young Aucassin?—the meed
Of swift repentance for his desperate deed ;
Seis'd by his sire's command that self-same hour, 285
And lodg'd within the prison of the tower.

Inquire we now how Nicolette has far'd,
She too a thrall, with constant watch and ward :
One night, poor sleepless child, her eyes she bent
On the bright moon, that fill'd the firmament, 290
(For 'twas the season now of prime delights,
Of calm long days, and mild unclouded nights,)
And heard the garden echo with the tale
Of night's lone bird, the songstress nightingale ;
And, as she listen'd, straight her fancy rov'd 295
To her lost Aucassin, her best belov'd ;
Thence to his cruel sire, whose ruthless mood
Caus'd all her wo, and sought to shed her blood.
It chanc'd her matron warder slept that hour :
She seis'd the time ; and, bent to flee the tower, 300
Crept from her couch with noiseless trembling haste,
And o'er her limbs her silken mantle cast ;

Next her twain sheets with knots united strong
 Slow to the window's beam she trail'd along,
 And by the end made fast ; then on the length 305
 Down-sliding, clasping with her utmost strength,
 Soon in the garden gay the maid did light,
 And trod the dewy grass with daisies white ;
 White were the flowers, yet, barefoot as she far'd,
 Seem'd dark of hue with Nicolette compar'd. 310

Led by the favouring moon's unclouded ray
 The garden's gate she pass'd, then shap'd her way
 On through the town, till weetless she arriv'd
 Where lay her love, of liberty depriv'd.

A massy tower it was, of ancient day, 315
 Now full of chinks, and verging to decay ;
 And from its gaping crannies seem'd to rise
 Sad words of wo and lamentable sighs :
 Such piteous plaining stay'd the listening maid,
 Close to its gloomy walls her ear she laid, 320
 Then quickly learn'd the wretched prisoner there
 Was Aucassin, the victim of despair.

' Ah gentle bachelor ! ' the maid began,
 ' Why thus lament ? ' why shed thy tears in vain ?
 ' Thy sire, thy house, in common hatred join, 325
 ' Sweet Aucassin ! I never can be thine !

' Farewell ! I go, the boundless ocean cross'd,
 ' In a strange land to dwell, to thee for ever lost,'
 E'en as she spoke, one clustering ringlet fair
 Her dainty fingers sever'd from her hair, 330
 And cast unto her love ; the gentle boy
 Caught up the precious gift with amorous joy,
 The crisped lock with glowing kisses press'd,
 Then clasp'd in close concealment to his breast ;
 And ' ah, sweet Nicolette ! thou may'st not flee ! 335
 ' Sweet maid ! ' he cried, ' I cannot part with thee :
 ' If from this land thy luckless footsteps wend,
 ' Thy deed will sadly bring my days to end.'

On the tower top, for needful watch and ward,
 A sentinel there stood, its custom'd guard ; 340
 He heard their moan ; it fill'd his heart with ruth
 For the poor helpless maid and captive youth ;
 When from the distant entrance of the street
 He caught the trampling sound of hasty feet,
 The soldiers of the night ; more nigh they drew, 345
 And the bright moon bewray'd them to his view ;
 Each in his hand a sheathless falchion held,
 But their long garb the glittering blades conceal'd :
 ' Wo worth the while ! ' he cried, ' they now are nigh ;
 ' Sore pity such a gentle damsel die ! 350

‘ And, should she perish, well my heart doth read

‘ Young Aucassin will not survive the deed.’

Fain would he tell the maid, but then he fears

His treacherous words might warn the soldiers’ ears ;

At last, by sleight his counsel to convey,

355

He merrily ’gan chant the following lay.

‘ Maid, of heart so true,

‘ Of tresses fair, of laughing eye,

‘ Your rosy cheeks bewray the tale

‘ How your lover you did view :

360

‘ But beware those losells nigh ;

‘ Biting falchions hid from you

‘ In their folded garments lie ;

‘ Bloody pastimes soon ensue,

‘ If wisdom fail.’

365

‘ Heaven’s peace your sire’s and mother’s soul betide

‘ For your good deed !’ the gentle damsel cried ;

Then backward slunk, and crouching to the ground,

And gathering close her flowing mantle round,

Unseen of all, her dainty limbs she laid

370

Where a huge buttress cast its dismal shade ;

The soldier band their custom’d course kept on,

Kenn’d not the lurking maid, and soon were gone :

Then one farewell she sigh’d of deep despair,

And sought the moated ramparts of Beaucaire.

375

Awhile dismay'd her wishful eyes she cast
Down on the sloping gulph, profound and vast ;
But dread of Garins' ire forbade her stay,
And urg'd her to attempt the dangerous way ;
With pious hand one mystick cross she made 380
In humble trust of heaven's directing aid,
Then, slithering down, and graz'd with many a wound,
Reach'd the dank bottom of the moat profound.
One deed was done ; but sorer toils remain ;
The summit of the opposing steep to gain : 385
It chanc'd, so favouring fortune seem'd to prove
The partner and the guide of loyal love,
A pointed stake athwart her footsteps lay,
The relick of Beaucaire's conflicting day ;
With her twain hands the joyous damsel light 390
Caught up the prop, and strove to scale the height ;
Now step by step her tottering feet she plies,
Pois'd on her staff, and scarcely seems to rise,
Yet does she nought for weariness recoil,
Till the steep summit gain'd rewards her toil. 395

Not further thence than cross-bow well might speed,
Twice drawn, its bolt, if endlong shots succeed,
A darksome forest wild its skirts around
Stretch'd far and wide o'er threescore miles of ground,

Ill fam'd of all ; for, as their wonted laire, 400
Wild beasts and poisonous reptiles harbour'd there.
Sad strait for tender maid ! some monster's prey
If onward she should urge her venturous way ;
Yet, should she wait, captivity was nigh,
And the Count's doom by cruel death to die. 405
Thick bushy brakes, the purlieu of the wild,
Grew straggling round ; and hither sped the child :
In these, foredone with toil, was fain to creep,
And sooth her senses in forgetful sleep.
Now dawn'd the day with streaky radiance red ; 410
The shepherd swains their flocks to pasture led ;
Then on the grass a rustick garment cast,
And, placing bread thereon, their plain repast,
All sitting down their morning meal began
Where from its welling source a streamlet ran. 415
Their simple chat awak'd the slumbering maid,
She gently greeted all, and thus she said :
' Know ye, kind friends, young Aucassin the fair,
' Whose sire, Count Garins, rules o'er all Beaucaire ?'—
' Ay, marry do we, lass !'—the swains replied ; 420
But, gazing as they spoke, such charms espied
That all astonied were with strange dismay,
And ween'd them question'd by some forest fay.

' I pray ye, friends !' sweet Nicolette rejoin'd,
 ' Haste to the youth, and tell him he may find 425
 ' Within these baskets here a hind so white
 ' He'd give five hundred marks to see the sight,
 ' Nay, all the gold this spacious world contains,
 ' Might sweet possession recompence his pains :
 ' Tell him that here, with virtues rare endued 430
 ' To cure all pains, all sore solicitude,
 ' For three full days she harbours nigh this place,
 ' And wooes the merry hunter to the chace ;
 ' This season past, his search will all be vain,
 ' Nor may he ever hope to cure his pain.' 435

So ceas'd the maid, and straight with lily hand
 A slender dole she dealt the shepherd band,
 (These would not to the town her tidings bear,
 But sure would tell him should they ken him there,)

Then lightly tripp'd, with hope's enchantment gay, 440
 To a green brake beside the foot-worn way.

That spot she chose ; and there a bower she wove
 To harbour and to try her absent love :
 ' If well he love me as his lips declare,
 (Thus argued with herself the damsel fair,) 445
 ' He sure will halt when first this bower he see,
 ' Then enter in and bide for sake of me : '

And as she whisper'd thus, she deck'd her cell
Still with gay flowers and herbs of odorous smell,
Then by a sheltering thorn lay secret down, 450
In hope fair chance her harmless wile might crown.

Meanwhile the Viscount of Beaucaire with dread
Heard the strange tale that Nicolette had fled,
And, by a crafty rumour, cast to ward
The ire and foul suspicions of his lord ; 455
Swift through the town he spread the tidings wide
How Nicolette in bed by night had died :
Count Garins hears, and listens with delight,
Weens all his former grief extinguish'd quite ;
Frees from the tower his late imprison'd boy, 460
And strives to rouse his sadden'd soul to joy.
Straight for a sumptuous feast he gives command,
And calls the knights and damsels of his land ;
Throng'd was the court, and various pastimes shewn,
All naught to Aucassin, whose love was gone : 465
Apart from all, in melancholy mood,
Reclin'd against a column's height he stood,
Till, at the last, in pity of his plight,
Thus counsell'd in his ear a friendly knight :
' List, sir, to me, nor think my counsel vain, 470
' For I once suffer'd of the self-same pain :

‘ Scenes such as these desponding minds offend ;
‘ Hence—mount your steed—and to the green-wood wend ;
‘ There, as you slowly wind your reckless way,
‘ Your ears beguil’d with many a warbler’s lay, 475
‘ Your eyes with springing grass and flowerets bright,
‘ Strange solace may arise, and sooth your troubled spright.’
‘ Thanks, gentle knight!’ young Aucassin replied,
And from the festive hall unnotic’d hied ;
Then, on his steed, the city gates he pass’d, 480
And sought with heavy cheer the woodland waste.

Hard by the fountain’s brink in rustick chat,
Again, as late, the simple shepherds sat :
A frock for drapet lay upon the grass ;
And, bought with bounty of their stranger lass, 485
Two meal-cakes were their fare ; and as they fed
Thus to his comrades shepherd Lucas said :
‘ Good luck, my mates, where-ever he abide,
‘ Our gentle valet Aucassin betide !
‘ And happy chance the flaxen lass attend, 490
‘ For, soothly, she hath been the shepherds’ friend ;
‘ Her goodly gift, we wot, hath purchas’d cakes,
‘ And case-knives too, and flutes for merrymakes.’
E’en while he spoke, young Aucassin appear’d,
And caught with ravish’d ears his closing word, 495

‘ For sure,’ quoth he, ‘ these shepherd swains have met

‘ My best-belov’d, mine own sweet Nicolette!’

Then, while he dealt them dole with willing hand,

Uprose the ablest spokesman of the band,

And of the milk-white hind he told the tale 500

That woo’d the hunter in the forest dale :

‘ Thanks, friends!’ quoth Aucassin, and prick’d his steed,

‘ Her shall I rouse, so heaven my hopes succeed;’—

And to the tangled waste he lightly hied ;

And, ever and anon, ‘ sweet love!’ he cried, 505

‘ Own sister Nicolette ! for thee I haste

‘ To brave the salvage monsters of the waste,

‘ For peep of thy bright eyes, thy tender smiles,

‘ For thy sweet speech that every grief beguiles;’—

Then spurr’d amain : his limbs were all-to torn 510

With twining bramble and sharp-pointed thorn,

But nought for these he car’d ; nor slack’d his way

For the last glimmer of declining day ;

Yet, as he saw the sinking sun depart,

From either eye the briny tears did start : 515

Howbeit the paler moon day’s light supplied,

And on he far’d, with fortune for his guide,

Till hard at hand he spied, in prosperous hour,

His lady’s arbour green, bedeck’d with many a flower.

Scarce on the flowers his ravish'd eyes were set, 520
But 'lo!' he cried, 'the bower of Nicolette!

'Sweet mistress mine! her curious fingers well
'Have wrought this shade, this heart-delighting cell,
'And here for love of her will I alight,
'And musing pass away the livelong night:' 525

Speaking, he sprang; but by his haste o'erthrown,
Pitch'd from his seat, and lux'd the shoulder-bone:
Maim'd as he was, with single hand made fast
Beneath a spreading tree his steed he plac'd,
Then, heedless of his pain, and wild with love, 530

Sped to the bower his loyal damsel wove,
And, entering there, 'Hail, dear delicious scene!
'Hail, flowers!' he cried, 'hail pleached branches green!
'What bliss were mine, what fond embracements dear,
'Were Nicolette, my heart's best solace, here.' 535

The maid o'erheard, and springing up for joy,
Ran from her covert nigh to clasp the boy:
So both are bless'd; and heaven, that aye doth shew
Its patronage to love that's pure and true,
So prosper'd the sweet lass, her strength alone 540
Thrust deftly back the dislocated bone;
Then, culling curious herbs of virtue tried,
While her white smock the needful bands supplied,

With many a coil the limb she swath'd around,
And nature's strength return'd, nor knew its former wound.

Now lightly on his courser, prest for flight, 546
See the young gallant seat his heart's delight,
Then mount behind; and, in his lusty arms
Still as he clips and treasures all her charms,
With ceaseless soft caress by turns invade 550
The eyes, fresh lips, and forehead of the maid:
And 'whither wend we, love?' at times she cried,
'I wot not, I!' the joyous youth replied;
'What matters whither, to what land, we flee,
'So nought divide sweet Nicolette from me.' 555

Thus, many a mountain tall, and lonely vale,
And populous burghs and cities passing tale,
They travers'd in their course; nor check'd their flight
Till now the billowy sea was full in sight:
On the long strand the busy merchants stood, 560
Their buoyant barks danc'd proud'ly on the flood;
One, prest to sail, they spy; there passage crave,
Mount the steep side, and gayly cleave the wave.

Alas! not long:—the sky with alter'd form
Looks darksome round, and speaks the gathering storm: 565
The sailors, timely warn'd, stand in for shore,
And gain the spacious port of strong Torelore.

Here three full years of bliss without alloy
Dwelt with his partner fair the jocund boy;
Till, with a mighty fleet that lin'd the strand 570
Came the fierce Saracen to spoil the land :
To hostile power Torelore's proud fortress yields,
Waste is her peopled town and fertile fields,
Her folk all fallen, of timeless death the prey,
Or driven in sad captivity away : 575
And, with the rest, to different vessels borne,
Wend the poor maid and Aucassin forlorn,
He, hands and feet, confin'd : the paynim host
Then spread their canvas wide, and quit the ravag'd coast.

Scarce had they lost the land, when o'er the deep, 580
Howl'd far and wide the storm with scattering sweep.
Far from the rest, and driven from shore to shore,
Aucassin's bark the surging billows bore ;
Then wreck'd at last, by favouring fortune rare,
Fast by the castle walls of proud Beaucaire. 585

What wonder reign'd I need not now record,
When the folk saw and hail'd their future lord :
(For, while the son his various fortunes tried,
The father and the mother both had died :)
On to the castle straight the crowds proceed, 590
With seemly pomp, their sovereign at their head ;

There peacefully he reign'd, nor knew regret
Save for sad loss of hapless Nicolette.

The maid, we lately told, from Torelore's coast
Borne by the foe, and by the tempest toss'd. 595

To waste that luckless land with dole and dread
The Carthaginian king his fleet had led,
Not singly bent, for mov'd with equal ire
Sail'd his twelve sons, all sovereigns like their sire :
And now, with downcast eye and look depress'd 600

The monarch's bark contain'd the captive guest.
Her peerless charms each royal youth control,
Tame his rude will, and regulate his soul :
Much they regard the maid, and oft demand
How nam'd her parents, how her native land : 605

' In sooth, I know not,' Nicolette replied,
' For I a long captivity have tried :
' In tender age by paynim corsairs sold ;
' Full fifteen summers since have onward roll'd.'

And now with joy their bark the sailors moor 610
Where stately Carthage guards the wave-worn shore ;
Then what amazement seisd the captive maid !
Each scene, each spot, her wondering eyes survey'd,
The castle's rooms and ramparts,—all appears
The witness of her birth and infant years. 615

Nor less of wonder mov'd, nor less delight,
The monarch old, to hear her lips recite
Such tales of infancy as prov'd her plain
His daughter long time lost, and wail'd in vain.
On her soft neck he fell, there silent lay, 620
And in a flood of tears gave rapture way :
Their father's joy the gallant princes share,
And clasp by turns their new-found sister fair ;
Then fain would sway her to be woo'd and won
By a young Saracen, a monarch's son : 625
But the pure mind of Nicolette abhorr'd
To yield her plighted hand to paynim lord ;
Young Aucassin alone her thoughts possess'd,
He 'reav'd her days and anxious nights of rest,
None other hope she held, no wish approv'd, 630
Save once again to join her best-belov'd.

So bent, she cast for furtherance of her plan
To learn the minstrel's art, and pass for man :
The violin's soft tones in secret hour
Oft did she wake, and soon was mistress of their power ; 635
Then, when the night its darksome influence shed,
Far from the castle walls the damsel fled,
Nor stay'd, till hard beside old ocean's flood
Where a poor female's lonely cottage stood,

Her wearied feet were fain to halt at length ; 640
So there she lodg'd, and there renew'd her strength :
Her hands, her beauteous face, she rudely marr'd
With blackening juice from bruised herb prepar'd ;
And soon to move with hardier port began,
In mantle, hose, and doublet, garb'd like man : 645
And, as she sojourn'd thus, and eyed the wave,
Bound to Provence she kenn'd a vessel brave,
And straight for passage sued ; and clave the main
With prosperous course to fertile France again.
Now forth she fares, a minstrel in attire, 650
(Her violin's sweet notes the swains admire,)
And shapes her course, till hard at hand she spies
Beaucaire's embattled towers and ramparts rise.
On the high steps that grac'd his palace gate,
Girt with his barons bold in royal state 655
It chanc'd Aucassin sat ; in pensive mood
His eyes were fix'd upon the neighbouring wood :
There, some years past, in prosperous search he met
His heart's desire, his own sweet Nicolette :
The well-known scene, to sad remembrance dear, 660
Swell'd in his heart, and wak'd a glistening tear.
Just then, advancing from the green-wood brake,
Thus to the court the minstrel damsel spake :

' Please you to hear, my noble masters all,
 ' What hap true lovers twain did once befall? 665
 ' Of gentle Aucassin my tale shall tell,
 ' And Nicolette, who lov'd each other well.'

E'en as she speaks, applausive murmurs rise,
 And straight her violin's clear tones she tries,
 And tunes her voice, and sings the passing truth 670
 Of the maid's passion for her darling youth;
 And how she scap'd the tower, and how she stay'd
 Till the boy met her in the woodland shade :
 Nor slack'd she song, till now her cheerless lay
 Reach'd the sad hour that bore them both away; 675
 Their luckless doom the minstrel sang with pain,
 Then with the following musick clos'd her strain :--

' Of him no more my story tells;
 ' But Nicolette in Carthage dwells
 ' With her sire of royal sway; 680
 ' And her sire hath spousal plann'd
 ' With felon paynim king, they say;
 ' But she still answers, Nay!
 ' No lord will she obey
 ' Save Aucassin, boon and bland: 685
 ' Kill her thousand times they may,
 ' None but he shall win her hand.'

What needs to tell, how while the lay did last
 Distraught Aucassin seem'd, like wight aghast ?
 Thick rising singults his full heart oppress'd, 690
 And nigh to bursting throb'd his quivering breast.
 Far from the crowd, ere well she ceas'd her song,
 To a lone spot he led the maid along ;
 And—' Know'st thou then ? ' he cried, ' thou minstrel youth,
 ' This maid whose strange adventures wake my ruth ? 695
 ' Sweet Nicolette ! of whom thy tale doth tell,
 ' Who lov'd her gentle Aucassin so well ?'
 ' To Carthage late my wandering footsteps stray'd,'
 The songstress answer'd, ' there I saw the maid ;
 ' And one, more seeming for lost love forlorn, 700
 ' More frank, more loyal, never sure was born !
 ' Full sore distress and martyrdoms abhorr'd
 ' She bore, yet still refus'd a paynim lord.'
 ' Sweet gentle friend ! ' young Aucassin rejoin'd,
 ' Once more, where-e'er she dwell, the damsel find ! 705
 ' Tell her that once her place of sojourn known,
 ' Straight thither, wing'd with love, I should have flown ;
 ' Tell her what flattering hopes I still have fed,
 ' Her still have vow'd, and her alone, to wed :
 ' Go—and be all your choicest arts applied 710
 ' To win her here to me, to be my bride,

- Large gifts of gold and silver, noble meed
- As your own thoughts can promise, crown your deed.'

Aucassin ceas'd; and, as an earnest paid,
Gave twenty marks of silver to the maid: 715

She promis'd and retir'd; yet, as she pass'd,
On her dear lord one parting look she cast,
And saw him all in tears: her heart was mov'd,
Nor could she thus forsake her best-belov'd;
But back she turn'd, and pray'd him to be cheer'd; 720
' Put trust in me,' she cried, ' be nothing fear'd;
' Soon shall my zeal your warmest hopes fulfil,
' And win your lovely lady to your will.'

Now, left the castle gates, as swift as thought
The Viscount of Beaucaire the minstrel sought; 725
With grief she learns her friend no longer liv'd,
In solitude his widow'd spouse surviv'd;
She, who in childhood erst the maid did rear,
And as her daughter deem'd, and held as dear,
Beholds her with an ecstasy of joy 730
In uncouth habit of a minstrel boy:

So there the damsel stay'd; and culling there
Choice cleansing simples from the neighbouring laire,
Chafes with their precious juice all stains away,
And gives her skin's pure lustre back to day: 735

The balm of rest, the bath's salubrious power,
In one short week restores dim beauty's flower.
The good Viscountess then with joy array'd
In her own costliest robes the lovely maid;
High on a silken couch she seats her charms, 740
Then speeds to guide her lover to her arms.

He, from the hour he heard the minstrel's strain,
Had pass'd his days and livelong nights in pain :
' Rise, follow me,' the good Viscountess cried,
' My art perchance may make these woes subside :' 745

He rose, and follow'd ; in his dubious mind
Disquietude with rising hope combin'd ;
But, when he enter'd,—when his eyes survey'd—
O strange astonishment !—his loyal maid ;
All motionless he stood : at such a sight 750
Excess of wondrous joy o'ercame him quite.

Light leap'd the damsel from her couch of state,
And sprang with outspread arms to clasp her mate ;
Then fondly gaz'd, then clasp'd him o'er again,
And kiss'd with winning smile his eyelids twain. 755

What mutual soft caresses soon ensued,
By thousands given and ta'en, and still renew'd,
How both together pass'd the fleeting night,
How the next morn surpris'd them with her light,

I tell not here :—suffice, in close of all, 760
When seemly hour was come, from gorgeous hall
On to the church Aucassin led the fair,
And wedlock made her Countess of Beaucaire.

Thus, many a sore distress and sorrow pass'd,
Behold these lovers reunite at last ; 765
On Aucassin the maid's true heart was set,
His constant heart still beat for Nicolette ;
Long liv'd they both in pleasures unallay'd :
So ends the pretty tale that I have made.



The Lap of the Little Bird.



THE LAY OF THE LITTLE BIRD.

IN days of yore, at least a century since,
There liv'd a carle as wealthy as a prince :
His name I wot not ; but his wide domain
Was rich with stream and forest, mead and plain ;
To crown the whole, one manor he possess'd 5
In choice delight so passing all the rest,
No castle burgh or city might compare
With the quaint beauties of that mansion rare.
The sooth to say, I fear my words may seem
Like some strange fabling, or fantastick dream, 10
If, unadvis'd, the portraiture I trace,
And each brave pleasure of that peerless place ;
Foreknow ye then, by necromantick might
Was rais'd this paradise of all delight ;

A good knight own'd it first ; he, bow'd with age, 15
Died, and his son possess'd the heritage :
But the lewd stripling, all to riot bent,
(His chattels quickly wasted and forespent,)
Was driven to see this patrimony sold
To the base carle of whom I lately told. 20
Ye wot right well there only needs be sought
One spendthrift heir, to bring great wealth to nought.

A mighty tower the building central stood
In a vast plain encompass'd with a flood ;
And hence one lucid arm alone there stray'd, 25
That circled in a clustering orchard's shade :
'Twas a choice charming plat ; profuse around
Flowers, roses, odorous spices cloth'd the ground ;
Unnumber'd kinds, and all abundant shower'd
Such aromattick balsam as they flower'd, 30
Their fragrance might have stay'd man's parting breath,
And chas'd the impending agony of death.
The ground one level held, and o'er the sward
Tall shapely trees their verdant foliage rear'd,
All equal growth, and low their branches came, 35
Thick set with goodliest fruits of every name.
In midst, to cheer the ravish'd gazer's view,
A gushing fount its waters upward threw,

Thence slowly on with crystal current pass'd,
 And crept into the distant flood at last : 40
 But nigh its source a pine's umbrageous head
 Stretch'd far and wide in deathless verdure spread,
 Met with broad shade the summer's sultry gleam,
 And through the livelong year shut out the beam.

Such was the scene :—yet still the place was bless'd 45
 With one rare pleasure passing all the rest :
 A wondrous bird of energies divine
 Had fix'd his dwelling in the tufted pine ;
 There still he sat, and there with amorous lay
 Wak'd the dim morn, and clos'd the parting day : 50
 Match'd with these strains of linked sweetness wrought
 The violin and full-ton'd harp were nought ;
 Of power they were with new-born joy to move
 The cheerless heart of long-desponding love ;
 Of power so strange, that should they cease to sound, 55
 And the blithe songster flee the mystick ground,
 That goodly orchard's scene, the pine-tree's shade,
 Trees, flowers, and fount, would all like vapour fade.

‘ Listen, listen to my lay !’

Thus the merry notes did chime, 60

‘ All who mighty love obey,

‘ Sadly wasting in your prime,

‘ Clerk and laick, grave and gay !

‘ Yet do ye, before the rest,
 ‘ Gentle maidens, mark me tell ! 65
 ‘ Store my lesson in your breast,
 ‘ Trust me it shall profit well :
 ‘ Hear, and heed me, and be bless’d !’

So sang the bird of old ; but when he spied
 The carle draw near, with alter’d tone he cried— 70

‘ Back, river, to thy source ! and thee, tall tower,
 ‘ Thee, castle strong, may gaping earth devour !
 ‘ Bend down your heads, ye gaudy flowers, and fade !
 ‘ And wither’d be each fruit-tree’s mantling shade !
 ‘ Beneath these beauteous branches once were seen 75
 ‘ Brave gentle knights disporting on the green,
 ‘ And lovely dames ; and oft, these flowers among,
 ‘ Stay’d the blithe bands, and joy’d to hear my song ;
 ‘ Nor would they hence retire, nor quit the grove,
 ‘ Till many a vow were past of mutual love ; 80
 ‘ These more would cherish, those would more deserve ;
 ‘ Cost, courtesy, and arms, and nothing swerve.
 ‘ O bitter change ! for master now we see
 ‘ A faitour villain carle of low degree ;
 ‘ Foul gluttony employs his livelong day, 85
 ‘ Nor heeds nor hears he my melodious lay.’

So spake the bird ; and, as he ceas’d to sing,
 Indignantly he clapp’d his downy wing,

And straight was gone; but no abasement stirr'd
In the clown's breast at his reproachful word : 90
Bent was his wit alone by quaint device
To snare, and sell him for a passing price.
So well he wrought, so craftily he spread
In the thick foliage green his slender thread,
That when at eve the little songster sought 95
His wonted spray, his heedless foot was caught.
' How have I harm'd you ?' straight he 'gan to cry,
' And wherefore would you do me thus to die ?'—
' Nay, fear not,' quoth the clown, ' for death or wrong ;
' I only seek to profit by thy song ; 100
' I'll get thee a fine cage, nor shalt thou lack
' Good store of kernels and of seeds to crack ;
' But sing thou shalt ; for if thou play'st the mute,
' I'll spit thee, bird, and pick thy bones to boot.'
' Ah, wo is me !' the little thrall replied, 105
' Who thinks of song, in prison doom'd to bide ?
' And, were I cook'd, my bulk might scarce afford
' One scanty mouthful to my hungry lord.'
What may I more relate ?—the captive wight
Assay'd to melt the villain all he might ; 110
And fairly promis'd were he once set free,
In gratitude to teach him secrets three ;

Three secrets, all so marvellous and rare,
His race knew nought that might with these compare.

The carle prick'd up his ears amain; he loos'd 115
The songster thrall, by love of gain seduc'd :
Up to the summit of the pine-tree's shade
Sped the blithe bird, and there at ease he stay'd,
And trick'd his plumes full leisurely, I trow,
Till the carle claim'd his promise from below : 120
' Right gladly;' quoth the bird; ' now grow thee wise :
' All human prudence few brief lines comprize :
' First then, lest haply in the event it fail,
' YIELD NOT A READY FAITH TO EVERY TALE : '—
' Is this thy secret?' quoth the moody elf, 125
' Keep then thy silly lesson for thyself;
' I need it not : '—' Howbe 'tis not amiss
' To prick thy memory with advice like this :
' But late, meseems, thou hadst forgot the lore;
' Now may'st thou hold it fast for evermore. 130
' Mark next my second rule, and sadly know,
' WHAT'S LOST, 'TIS WISE WITH PATIENCE TO FOREGO.'

The carle, though rude of wit, now chaf'd amain;
He felt the mockery of the songster's strain.
' Peace,' quoth the bird; ' my third is far the best; 135
' Store thou the precious treasure in thy breast :

‘WHAT GOOD THOU HAST, NE’ER LIGHTLY FROM THEE CAST :’—

He spoke, and twittering fled away full fast.

Straight, sunk in earth, the gushing fountain dries,

Down fall the fruits, the wither’d pine-tree dies, 140

Fades all the beauteous plat, so cool, so green,

Into thin air, and never more is seen.

Such was the meed of avarice :—bitter cost !

The carle who all would gather, all has lost.



The Priest who had a Mother in spite of Himself.



THE PRIEST

WHO HAD A MOTHER IN SPIE OF HIMSELF.

List, lordings all, for new the tale I tell :
It chanc'd unto a priest I knew right well.

His aged mother, and a gamesome lass,
With him beneath one roof their days did pass ;
The crone, with years bent down, and hunch'd behind, 5
Show'd in her shape the model of her mind :
The leman had, besure, a pretty face ;
Nor fail'd she in the duties of her place ;
The crone was busy too, and toil'd amain ;
But different deeds a different guerdon gain : 10
So nothing lack'd the lass ; but she might have
Kirtles, and cloaks, and silver girdle brave,
And linings soft of lamb or squirrel's skin :
Forsooth the neighbours made a parlous din ;

The matron, ne'ertheless, was choicely fed, 15
Good pease, good pottage, and the best of bread;
But when she clamour'd to be costlier dress'd,
For here her taste was curious as the best,
Her eloquence might ne'er one whit prevail
Though the priest's ears were deafen'd with the tale. 20
Hence, loud from morn to evening would she scold,
And every neighbour heard her grievance told,
With calumnies and lies full many a score,
Still as she gadded on from door to door;
Till the whole village 'gan the priest to shun, 25
And hate him as a hard unnatural son.

At last, one morn when humour bore the sway,
And, as it chanc'd, it was a summer's day,
He fairly stopp'd the brawl with master-tone,
And bad her take her chattels, and begone. 30
She not a pace would budge, but—'yea!' she cried,
'I go, and bring the bishop by my side:
'Besure thy secret life shall be bewray'd,
'Lewd deeds and dealings with that shameless jade:'—
'Out!'—quoth the priest in choler; 'there's the door— 35
'Mark well the past, for thou shalt mark no more.'

Forth far'd the crone, nigh wood; nor slack'd her way
Till prostrate at the bishop's feet she lay;

There rav'd for vengeance, outcast and exil'd,
For vengeance on a base unnatural child, 40
Who, wanting long time past in reverence meet,
At length had driven her forth into the street
With foul reproach and other nameless ill,
To gratify a strumpet's wanton will.

With patient ears the prelate heard the crone, 45
And promis'd her all justice should be done :
And, for his custom'd session was at hand,
Straight to the culprit priest he sent command
There to attend the charges to refute,
And bound the crone to prosecute her suit. 50

Now came the day ; the priests press on to court,
Two hundred sure, and crowds of meaner sort ;
Through the mid-throng the beldam passage made,
And sued full loud for justice undelay'd :
' Peace ! ' quoth the prelate judge, with look severe ; 55
' Wait thou thy son's approach attendant here ;
' If true thy charge, or e'er this court be ended
' His benefice is gone, and he suspended ! '

The crone, unskill'd in phrase, now ween'd to see
Her pendent child aloft on gallow-tree, 60
And felt her inmost bowels yearn amain
For the base bantling she had borne with pain,

And lov'd so dear, and nourish'd at her breast ;
 And rued her luckless choler unrepres'd.
 Fain would she flee ; but flight may nought prevent 65
 Her son's arrest, and sequent punishment :
 This way and that her crafty wit she tries,
 And, as a woman rarely lacks device,
 So well she sped, that chancing to behold
 A chaplain boon, with chin of double fold, 70
 With glossy cheek, just entering at the door,
 And a huge mass of cumbrous paunch before,
 ' Lo here ! lo here my bairn ! ' she 'gan to cry ;
 ' Now, sire, now grant me justice, or I die !'
 ' Unthankful son ! ' the prelate straight began 75
 To the strange priest with mute amazement wan,
 ' Thus dost thou scant thine aged parent there
 ' To deck thy leman loose with robes of vair ?
 ' Thus shame the church, and bring her wealth to waste
 ' In harlot revel squander'd and disgrac'd ? '— 80
 ' Liege lord ! ' the astonished chaplain cried, ' I know,
 ' And practic'd once, what sons to mothers owe ;
 ' Many a year since, so may my bones find rest !
 ' My parent died, and all those duties ceas'd :
 ' But for that woman there, by day or night 85
 ' Till this strange hour she never cross'd my sight !'

'How!' quoth the prelate, kindling as he spoke,
 'Thus would'st thou rid thy shoulder from the yoke?
 'Thy parent, first ill-treated, then denied,
 'And the strong justice of my court defied. 90
 'Hear then—in thee this instant I arrest
 'All ministry and function of a priest,
 'Unless borne hence with thee this matron wend,
 'Hous'd, clad, and cherish'd as thy dearest friend:
 'Forth from this hour should she or stranger prove 95
 'That aught thou fail in debt of filial love,
 'The law takes course.'—The wrathful prelate ceas'd:
 Abash'd full sore retir'd the luckless priest;
 In doleful dump he mounts his steed amain
 With his foul prize, and homeward turns the rein. 100
 Two miles or more the pair had journey'd on,
 When in the road they met the beldam's son;
 And, 'whither bent?' the rueful chaplain cried:
 'I to the bishop's court,' the son replied:
 'Thee,' quoth the first, 'may like good luck befall! 105
 'I too was summon'd to attend the hall,
 'Nor wist I why; and lo, this goodly meed,
 'My mother, as it seems, to house and feed.'
 The son, who, while the priest his story told,
 Eyed the quaint gestures of the beldam old 110

With nods and winks to keep the secret tight,
 Refrain'd from laughter well as mortal might :
 ' If thou,' quoth he, ' thus early at the court,
 ' Hast had one mother given thee to support,
 ' My mind forebodes our worthy prelate's pain 115
 ' May gift us tardier travellers with twain.
 ' What say'st thou, friend ? suppose some wight inclin'd
 ' To take this reverend matron up behind,
 ' And quit thee of thy charge, and kind entreat ;
 ' What brave reward might recompense the feat ?' 120
 ' Troth,' quoth the priest, ' to speak without disguise,
 ' I'm not the man to scant him in his price :
 ' I'll pay him forty livres by the year,
 ' Villain or clerk, nor think the bargain dear.'
 ' Enough, fair brother mine !' returns the son ; 125
 ' So please the lady here, our deed is done.'

The crone well-pleas'd besure : so, all agreed,
 Home son and mother fare on pacing steed ;
 Each year his plighted dole the chaplain paid,
 Nor future plaint to bishop e'er was made. 130



The Canonesses and the Gray Nuns.

BY JOHN DE CONDÉ.



THE CANONESSES AND THE GRAY NUNS.

ONE night, as stretch'd upon my bed I lay,
('Twas in the merry month of lusty May,)
My heart all joy, my spirits clear and bright,
And every sense inspir'd with love's delight ;
I dreamt a dream :—meseem'd, I wist not why, 5
Beneath a tall o'ershadowing pine to lie :
Round, far and wide, a pathless forest spread ;
And birds, by thousands, caroll'd o'er my head :
Various the notes, to admiration sung,
And love's sweet musick trill'd from every tongue. 10

Thus as I mus'd, and listen'd at mine ease,
The joyous concert seem'd at once to cease ;
Thereat I look'd, and saw a parrot stand
Who in their mid-song check'd that warbling band.

The favour'd bird great Venus' courier came, 15
And bore this message from his royal dame,
That when the morrow's dawn should first unfold,
High court of justice there the goddess-queen would hold:
And at these tidings joy brake forth aloud,
And a new burst of musick fill'd the wood : 20
And straight, while sweetly rose their echoing lays,
To love's great queen a throne the songsters raise.

The sun scarce rising shed his orient flame,
Ere with her countless train the goddess came.
Earth, all around, with springing flowerets grac'd 25
And signified her footsteps as she pass'd ;
Each neighbouring tree with livelier foliage spread,
And stretch'd its shadowy mantle o'er her head ;
And bubbling fountains rose, and gently roll'd
O'er beds of sparkling gravel, pure like gold : 30
So down she sat : and straight her vassal crowd,
The lovers of her train, in reverence bow'd ;
Prone at her feet in adoration lay,
And sigh'd the homage of their hearts away.
And next to these, in meet succession, came 35
Those who of love endur'd some tortious shame ;
At her throne's footstool stood the suppliant throng,
And all for justice sued, and remedy of wrong.

A lovely Canoness came first in sight,
 Whom many a gentle led, and many a knight ; 40
 (Her intercourse, it seem'd, had swoln their pride ;)

Some social sisters grac'd the fair-one's side.
 Her robe well told the order that she bore ;
 With many a seemly fold 'twas plaited o'er ;
 And o'er the same there was a surplice spread, 45
 All wrought of linen of the slenderest thread,
 And white like snow ; though on its surface sleek
 Some rumples seem'd her journey's toil to speak.

She thus began :—' Deign, mighty queen, to hear ;
 ' Yield to thy subjects' complaints thy favouring ear ; 50
 ' Zeal for thy cause thy votaries here proclaim,
 ' Here vow that zeal through countless time the same.
 ' Long wont the best, the noblest, of the land,
 ' Sue for our love, and joy in our command.
 ' Light was all toil, and cheap was all expence, 55
 ' To win that palm of high pre-eminence ;
 ' And feasts, and tournaments, and tables-round,
 ' Proclaim'd the wight thus bless'd and thus renown'd.
 ' Now, changeful doom ! the Nuns with amice gray
 ' Lure from our court our paramours away : 60
 ' Kind pliant guise that no long service draws
 ' Hath won some base ones to desert our cause,

' And yield them preference :—Regard our cries,
 ' Great queen ! be just ! these saucy foes chastize ;
 ' Nor let them henceforth claim with upstart tone 65
 ' Wights form'd for us, as we for them, alone.'

So ceas'd the dame ; and Venus, heavenly fair,
 With token of redress receiv'd her prayer :
 Yet stay'd she doom, as meet the adverse side
 Should plead their cause with argument replied. 70
 A lovely Bernardine of winning mien
 Then forth advanc'd, and thus address'd the queen.

' Great queen ! for loveliness and power renown'd !
 ' To work whose will our votive lives are bound ;
 ' Sole bliss, sole solace of our hapless state ! 75
 ' I hear our rancorous foes' reproachful hate :
 ' What then ? hath nature shap'd of homelier mould ?
 ' (Attest, great queen, if hère the truth be told !)
 ' Are we then fashion'd of some baser clay ?
 ' Less form'd to love, to be belov'd, than they ? 80
 ' Are we less young, less dainty than our foes ?
 ' Or can our hearts less feel for lovers' woes ?
 ' Their garb more trim, more sumptuous, I confess ;
 ' But boon demeanour sure excelleth dress ?
 ' Ours are the tender glance, the winning smile, 85
 ' The sweet solitudes that life beguile.

‘ On us, on ours, this grievous charge they lay,
 ‘ That we have borne their paramours away :
 ‘ Come, let the truth be known !—’tis scornful pride
 ‘ Hath scar’d full oft their suitors from their side : 90
 ‘ Our softness charms, our modesty invites,
 ‘ And hence our train of gentles and of knights :
 ‘ These are our arts, and these our forceful snares
 ‘ To capture helpless lovers unawares.
 ‘ Oft have we tried, but still have tried in vain, 95
 ‘ To send them back to their high dames again :
 ‘ Pleas’d with the cheer our simple sisters show,
 ‘ Some soon return, and some refuse to go.
 ‘ Nay, might we yield belief to what they say,
 ‘ Those dainty robes, that bravery of array, 100
 ‘ (No slender cost,) has vail’d a love less clear,
 ‘ More soil’d with interest than awaits them here.’

So spake the Bernardine ; and anger stirr’d
 Each Canoness to hear her closing word.
 Through the whole band a general murmur rose ; 105
 Each reddening cheek with indignation glows ;
 And, ‘ What ? ’ their advocate in haste replied,
 ‘ These, slaves add insult to their saucy pride !
 ‘ Boast how they love, and insolently dare
 ‘ In courtesies and charms with us compare, 110

- ‘ Good sooth, him well it fits to blush for shame
- ‘ Whose gross desire can feed so base a flame,
- ‘ Admire those limbs with unctuous woollen warm,
- ‘ And find gray gowns and rustick babbling charm.
- ‘ What knight, what noble, who of high degrees 115
- ‘ Would deign to cast away a thought on these,
- ‘ But for their forward ways, their wanton wiles,
- ‘ Looks void of shame, and loose lascivious smiles?
- ‘ Lo, this their secret spell men’s hearts to hold!
- ‘ Since, to the grief of Love, it must be told; 120
- ‘ Who sees those gifts he wills long time remain
- ‘ Sought by true hearts with aspiration vain,
- ‘ With suppliant sighs, with looks deject and pale,
- ‘ Here, prostitute to all, a general stale.
- ‘ Hence, honest friends, and, at the last grown wise, 125
- ‘ Let your lay-brothers and your monks suffice :
- ‘ There love your fill, there dole of presents deal,
- ‘ Make fat your mates from your own scanted meal;
- ‘ We yield you leave :—such wights as these ne’er dwell
- ‘ At Mons, at Maubeuge, Moutier, or Nivelles : 130
- ‘ But gentle blood—(I warn you once again—)
- ‘ Canons and knights—to us alone pertain :
- ‘ Aspire no more to pass these bounds decreed ;
- ‘ So part ye fair, and prosper in your deed.’

Here the proud dame her scornful counsel clos'd : 135
 No whit the adverse Nun seem'd discompos'd,
 But gently thus replied: ' Such furious mood
 ' I mark nor need not, for my cause is good.
 ' Rage such as thine is weakness, not support,
 ' To a good cause ; contemptuous of the court ; 140
 ' And a foul shock and insult, as I ween,
 ' To the great presence of our goddess-queen.
 ' Love heeds not wealth, nor nobleness of birth,
 ' But joys to mingle opposites on earth :
 ' An ermin'd dutchess oft less lov'd I read 145
 ' Than a poor village lass in lowly weed.
 ' Our gray Cistercian garb may nought compare
 ' With your long robes and mantles lin'd with vair ;
 ' But not for these we boast our rival might,
 ' But for our hearts, sole source of love's delight : 150
 ' Love wooes the heart alone ; and nought we fear
 ' From the great goddess-queen of censure here ;
 ' But trust with suppliant suit her will to move
 ' To grant us too the BENEFICE OF LOVE.'

Scarce ceas'd the Nun, when hollow murmurings loud
 Buzz'd on all sides throughout the countless crowd ; 156
 For various ways discordant interest draws,
 And various judgments scan the important cause.

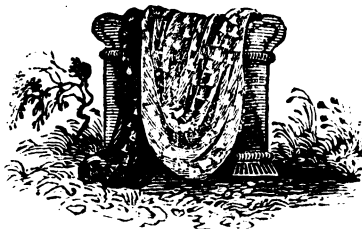
Some choose ambition's side, and best approve
 The Canonesses' claims to rule in love ; 160
 But the most part their mutter'd suffrage join
 In favour of the modest Bernardine.

Thus all to all their different thoughts disclose,
 Till from her throne imperial Venus rose ;
 Then ceas'd the din at once, and all was still, 165
 While thus the goddess spake her sovereign will.

' To you, meseems, who here for judgment stand,
 ' Well known, o'er all that breathes, our high command :
 ' 'Tis I, sole origin of love, inspire
 ' Beast, fowl, and fish, all nature, with desire. 170
 ' Slaves to my law the mingling brutes embrace,
 ' By instinct urg'd to propagate their race :
 ' Man, nobler form'd, it fits at reason's call
 ' To make due choice ; and I accept of all.
 ' The monarch's son, the youth of low degree, 175
 ' Are both beheld with equal eyes by me :
 ' Let love, let loyal love man's heart engage,
 ' He wins my favour, be he prince or page.

' Ye Canonesses ! rob'd in surplice white,
 ' Long have I mark'd your service with delight : 180
 ' Your garb, your graces, and your birth, must gain
 ' And fill with suppliant crowds your suitor train ;

- ' Keep these ; yet drive not from my court away
 ' These nuns, sequester'd from the blaze of day,
 ' Whose hearts such constancy in secret prove, 185
 ' Whom harsh constraint inspires with mightier love.
 ' More elegance, I yield, more means to please
 ' Ye own, than dignify the lot of these ;
 ' Yet oft, for power of long-protracted course,
 ' The knight's gay steed falls short the labourer's horse.
 ' The peacock's plumage charms our dazzled eyes, 191
 ' But 'tis his flesh the daintier treat supplies.
 ' Within my court, alike to every kind,
 ' I will free choice, as willing all should find.
 ' On your wise governance alone depends 195
 ' To keep your gallant train of suitor friends :
 ' Take pattern from your rivals : learn from these
 ' More gentleness, and more desire to please ;
 ' And, trust my prescience, henceforth you'll deplore
 ' Your paramours inconstant grown no more. 200



The Order of Knighthood.



THE ORDER OF KNIGHTHOOD.

FROM the grave tales the wise are wont to tell,
Sure profit springs to him who hearkens well:
The following story, cloth'd in pleasant rhyme,
Shall prove this doctrine without waste of time.

Of such rare chance as erst in Paynim land 5
Befell that monarch Saladin the Grand,
That loyal Saracen, that warrior bold,
The worthy course shall now by me be told.
Long time sad Christendom had view'd with pain
Her holy faith depress'd, her votaries slain ; 10
Leagued, at the last, our pious warriors rose,
Worn out, it seem'd, and wearied of their woes :
Prest from all parts in glittering arms they stood,
And brav'd this shedder of the Christian blood;
And might stout deeds desir'd success have won, 15
Sure victory had been their's, and their's alone;

But heaven, to whom pertains the event of fight,
That boon denied, and baffled mortal might;
One huge disastrous day o'erwhelm'd their host,
And liberty or life was nobly lost. 20

Thrall'd with the captives of that luckless hour
Prince Hugh was found, of chivalry the flower;
Him, as their prince, Tabaria's land ador'd,
Him Galilee's fair plains confess'd their lord.
All prais'd the knight: his worth, the general theme, 25
Fill'd the proud Souldan's heart with just esteem:
Hence, when he saw the illustrious thrall attend,
He hail'd him with the count'nance of a friend,
And own'd that hour his boast, that hour which held
Tabaria's prince enchain'd, the glory of the field: 30
Yet, proudly brief, this doom he straight decreed;
Large ransome, or the forfeit of his head.

The captive prince thus left with option free,
Each wight that hears may well the choice foresee;
Forthwith he asks what sums his ransome claim'd, 35
And hears twice fifty thousand bysants nam'd:
The prince grew desperate when the sum was told,
Past hope it seem'd were e'en his principedom sold:
'Nay, nought there needs,' the gallant Souldan cries,
'That principedoms fall, thy ransome's sacrifice; 40

‘ Priz’d as a prince, and as a knight renown’d,
‘ Go, search the land, where-e’er thy faith is found,
‘ There seek thy liberty; approv’d in fight
‘ Within these climes there dwells no Christian wight,
‘ But, when he hears, will deal large dole to thee, 45
‘ And glory that his gift may set thee free.’

So counsell’d Saladin; so speaking, gave
Immediate passport to Tabaria brave :
The liberal boon one sole restriction bound ;
Twice when the sun should close his annual round 50
Should aught fall short the ransome to fulfil,
Back must the prince, to bide his conqueror’s will.

Fair were the terms, the prince was nothing loath,
But ratified the treaty with his oath;
Then thank’d the Souldan from his inmost heart, 55
And turn’d him on the instant to depart ;
When Saladin, who long had borne in mind
To learn whence knighthood sprang, and how defin’d,
Miss’d not the hour ; but by the hand he hent
His captive guest, in marvel what were meant, 60
And, to a lonely chamber straight retir’d,
Told what the tenour of his will requir’d.

‘ Oft have I learn’d,’ quoth he, ‘ the worth, the might,
‘ Of knights, so nam’d from some mysterious rite :

' Now, by that faith adjur'd which Christians hold, 65
 ' These rites declare! this dignity unfold !
 ' Here stay thy steps : for from thy hand I claim
 ' These rites, these honours, and this knightly name.'

Much with the strange command the prince confus'd
 Stood mute awhile, then decently refus'd : 70
 He fear'd 'twere sure the Holy Order's stain,
 Dealt to an Infidel, a man profane :
 Wroth was the Souldan at his thrall's delay,
 Sternly he frown'd, and warn'd him to obey;
 Ill did that season or that place become 75
 Weak pride, to brave the power that rul'd its doom :
 Words such as these desir'd obedience wrought,
 And knighthood's rites began and knighthood's lore was taught.

Now nigh the laver's verge the Souldan stood,
 And o'er his face was pour'd the cleansing flood ; 80
 Mown was his beard, and shorn his clustering hair,
 Whilst menial hands the mystick bath prepare.
 With meet regard, yet wondering in his mind,
 ' Whence grow these forms ?' he ask'd, ' and what design'd ?'—
 ' These, with the bath,' return'd the observant knight, 85
 ' Pure symbol of our first baptismal rite,
 ' Pourtray like pureness of man's soul within :—
 ' Let none dare enter here defil'd with sin.'

He ceas'd; the admiring Souldan heard with awe
 The strength, the sanctity, of knighthood's law. 90
 With sequent course each grave observance came,
 And still the prince unvail'd its moral and its aim.

When from the waves the imperial pupil rose,
 Sped to the appointed couch, and sought repose :
 ' Lo here !' he cried, ' the type of heavenly rest ! 95
 ' Of that sweet paradise that waits the bless'd !
 ' There the strong arm that still maintains the right,
 ' The weak man's guard against the oppressor's might,
 ' There the pure soul, when this world's sufferings cease,
 ' Finds sure reward and everlasting peace.' 100

When from the bed he sprang, and, wide display'd,
 The snow-white shirt his vigorous limbs array'd;
 ' Lo here !' Tabaria's prince remark'd again,
 ' This spotless cloth asks flesh without a stain.
 ' This scarlet robe,'—(a robe to hand he drew 105
 E'en as he spoke, and o'er the Paynim threw ;)
 ' This sumptuous robe with sanguine tinct imbued,
 ' Claims one for heaven resolv'd to shed his blood ;
 ' Speaks the true knight who shuns nor death nor dole,
 ' Fix'd is his faith, and heaven sustains his soul.' 110

Now all was sped, save one conclusive rite,
 The custom'd stroke that dubs the future knight.

This custom'd stroke, (for so Tabaria crav'd,
 Sway'd by the Paynim's rank,) the Souldan wav'd :
 Its place, as seem'd, grave precepts well might hold ; 115
 And thus the fourfold discipline was told.

‘ Still to the truth direct thy strong desire,
 ‘ And flee the very air where dwells a liar :
 ‘ Fail not the Mass ; there still with reverent feet
 ‘ Each morn be found, nor scant thine offering meet : 120
 ‘ Each week's sixth day with fast subdue thy mind,
 ‘ For 'twas the day of PASSION for mankind;
 ‘ Else let some pious work, some deed of grace,
 ‘ With substituted worth fulfil the place :
 ‘ Haste thee, in fine, when dames complain of wrong ; 125
 ‘ Maintain their right, and in their cause be strong :
 ‘ For not a wight there lives, if right I deem,
 ‘ Who holds fair hope of well-deserv'd esteem,
 ‘ But to the dames by strong devotion bound
 ‘ Their cause sustains, nor faints for toil or wound.’ 130

So spake the prince ; his words to wonder wrought :
 Great Saladin the exalted ardour caught :

High sense of gratitude inspir'd his breast,
 And words like these his kindling soul confess'd :
 ‘ Go :—from the band that, fallen within our power, 135
 ‘ Mourn the hard lot of war's disastrous hour,

‘ Choose where thou wilt ; ten knights thy lore hath freed ;
‘ Well do the glorious doctrines claim the meed.’

He ceas’d ; with thankfulness the prince replies,
Whilst in his breast he feels new boldness rise ; 140

And ‘ Sire !’ he adds, ‘ whilere thy wise decree
‘ Mark’d out the means to set thy prisoner free ;
‘ Taught me to trust that on this Eastern ground
‘ There dwells no wight for feats of arms renown’d,
‘ But when he hears my tale of ransome told 145
‘ Will glory in the cause that claims his gold :—

‘ First then I sue where I esteem the most ;
‘ And from thy bounty crave the Souldan’s cost.’
‘ Sir knight,’ great Saladin return’d again,
‘ Well hast thou sued ; thou shalt not trust in vain : 150
‘ Lo, half thy ransome to thy prayer is given ;
‘ All may be thine or e’er the hour of even.’

He spoke, and straightways to his audience-hall
With hastening step led on the illustrious thrall ;
In the large space arrang’d on either side 155

Full fifty Emirs throng’d its entrance wide ;
The gallant Souldan each in order sued,
And claim’d their gifts to ransome prince so good :
With rival zeal his sovereign each man heard,
Each, as he might, a liberal gift conferr’d : 160

Their zeal was vain; the enormous void to fill,
There lack'd full thirteen thousand bysants still :
Then Saladin, whose soul did nobly glow
With such high worth as none but heroes know,
From his own treasury bade that sum be told, 165
And to the captive prince dealt out the gold :
' There, Prince ! ' he cried, ' thy price of freedom see ;
' Take this ; and take unpurchas'd liberty ;
' Choose thy ten knights, the nearest to thy heart,
' I claim no ransom—uncontroll'd depart.' 170

Nought now there fail'd to crown Tabaria's joy,
But that his wealth was bounded in the employ :
In Paynim bonds full many a Christian lay,
And mourn'd his hopeless doom, and linger'd life away :
Fain would the prince with countless sums have sought 175
To loose these chains, but bootless was the thought,
For Saladin had sworn in ireful hour
By Mahomet's dread name, no ransom's power
Should from their woes the luckless captives free,
And yield them back to light and liberty : 180
Such was the Souldan's vow ; Tabaria griev'd
With a reluctant heart the gold receiv'd,
And, eight days' tarrying past, while feasting reign'd,
On the ninth morn safe-conduct he obtain'd :

Him fifty Paynims bold, a guardian band, 185
Safe through the perils of that hostile land
Lead on to Galilee ; with him there go
His ten, the chosen knights, the partners of his wo.
There ceas'd their toil, there vanish'd all their pain,
With gladden'd hearts they trod that soil again ; 190
There, free of soul, his gifts Prince Hugh diffus'd,
And riches, nobly dealt him, nobly us'd.

Sirs ! ye who hear my tale ! 'tis form'd to please
High-mettled souls and brave, and none but these.
For folk of other mould, right well I wot 195
'Tis all time lost ; they comprehend me not.
Enough of such in former days I've known,
All prompt to make this prince's case their own ;
To speak more plain—all prompt to have and hold
Such countless donatives of Paynim gold ; 200
Who yet have eyed me, when my tale was done,
Like some old dotard of the good times gone.



The Gentle Bachelor.

AN EXTRACT.



THE GENTLE BACHELOR.

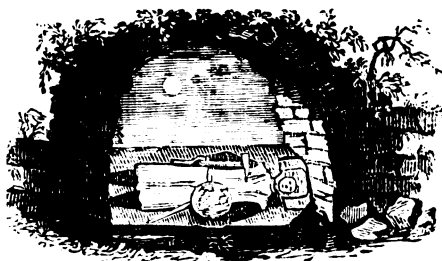
WHAT gentle bachelor is he
Sword-begot in fighting field,
Rock'd and cradled in a shield,
Whose infant food a helm did yield?
On lions' flesh he makes his feast,
Thunder lulls him to his rest ;
His dragon-front doth all defy,
His lion-heart, and libbard-eye,
His teeth that like boars' tushes are,
His tiger-fierceness, drunk with war.
Ponderous as a mace his fist
Down descends where-e'er it list,
Down, with bolt of thunder's force,
Bears to earth both knight and horse.

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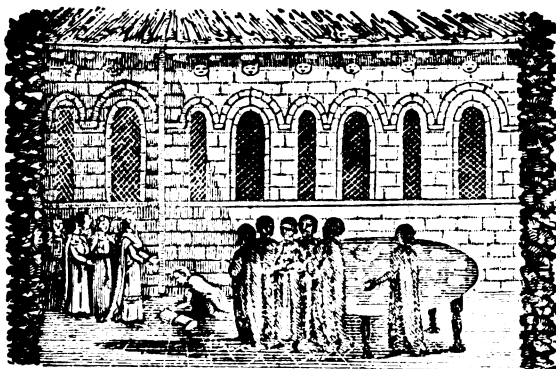
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Keener far than falcon's sight 15
His eye pervades the clouds of fight ;
And at tourneys 'tis his play
To change the fortune of the day,
Wielding well his helpful arm,
Void of fear, as nought might harm. 20
O'er the seas to English ground,
Be some rare adventure found,
Or to Jura's mount, he hies ;
These are his festivities.
In the fields of battle join'd, 25
Like to straws before the wind
All his foes avoid his hand,
None that deadly brunt may stand.
Him in joust may no man see
But still with foot from stirrup free, 30
Knight and courser casting down
Oft with mortal dint o'erthrown ;
Nor shield of bark, nor steel, nor lance,
Aught may ward the dire mischance.
When he slumbers, when he sleeps, 35
Still on head his helm he keeps ;
Other pillow fits not him
Stern of heart and stout of limb.

Broken swords, and spears that fail,
And the shatter'd hauberk's mail, 40
These compose the warriour's treat
Of poignant sauce or comfits sweet ;
And dust he quaffs in fields of death,
And quaffs the panting courser's breath.
When the lusty chase he tries, 45
On foot o'er hill and dale he hies ;
Lion, rutting hart, or bear,
He joys to seek and slaughter there.
Wealth to all throughout the land
Wide he deals with lavish hand. 50



The Mantle made amiss.



THE MANTLE MADE AMISS.

SWEET cousin mine, since well I ween your eye
Scans with delight the deeds of Arthur's day,
And since, before all other things, I try
To win you solace howsoe'er I may;
Lo here, recorded of his table-round
A goodly tale, with pain compil'd, I send :
This in an ancient volume late I found,
And scant could read, so rudely was it penn'd :
Please you, accept it kind ; for name I wis
It may be well yclep'd ' The Mantle made amiss.'

5

10

It was the time of Pentecost the feast,
When royal Arthur will'd high court to hold,
Statelier than e'er beforetime : thither press'd,
At his command, kings, dukes, and barons bold :
And for great jousts and tourneys were design'd, 15
Each he ordain'd his chosen fair to bring,
Damsel or spouse, the mistress of his mind :
So all was done, all stood before the king,
Damsel and dame, with many a matchless knight ;
That never England's realm beheld so proud a sight. 20

Each one to sport, to merrimake, was bent,
To merrimake beyond all former joy ;
But Mourgue the fay bethought her to prevent,
To work fair Guenever the Queen's annoy ;
Long had she envied those superiour charms 25
Which wan the heart of Launcelot du Lake ;
Jealous she was, for he had shunn'd her arms ;
So all were punish'd for their sovereign's sake :
And yet, perchance, had Guenever the Queen
Besought her presence there, this harm might not have been.

Now were the tables all prepar'd to dine, 31

Whiles at a window that o'erlook'd the street

Join'd with Sir Gawaine Arthur did recline,

In social converse mingling, as was meet :

Soon they beheld a youth advance, whose steed 35

An ample case of costliest velvet bore ;

Now he dismounts, now climbs the steps with speed ;

Now bends with humbled knee the King before :

' Sovereign, a boon ! ' he cries, ' with heart sincere

' A boon my mistress craves, as she that loves you dear.' 40

' No ill, no damage or reproach, shall spring ;

' Thus doth my princely dame command me say ;

' Pass but your word ere I reveal the thing,

' You never will have cause to rue the day.'

Won with his words, the monarch rais'd his head, 45

And, ' Friend, we grant thy boon unknown,' he cried :

Low louts the youth ; ' his princely dame,' he said,

' Told, by his mouth, her wish was satisfied.'

Then to the ground he bent, and 'gan unlace

The bands, embroider'd brave, that fast secur'd his case. 50

Well may ye guess King Arthur long'd amain
To see this costly crimson case unbound ;
Curious he was, and so were all his train,
Though doughty warriors of the table-round.
Forth from its womb the youth a mantle drew, 55
Such ne'er was seen in England's realm before,
So lovely did it seem, so rich, so new ;
Let the kind reader marvel ne'er the more ;
For all of fairy filaments 'twas wrought,
By fairy fingers spun, with power of fairy fraught. 60

Damsel and dame behov'd them well beware,
Such were its virtues, and so strange its power,
If loose inconstancy had wanton'd e'er
In those soft breasts which should be true love's bower ;
For to all such, whene'er they might assay 65
To deck them therewithal, 'twould shrink, 'twould swell,
Now long, now short 'twould be :—Ah wicked fay !
Thou know'st thy fellow-females' mood too well !
Had they but guess'd what silk 'twas wove withal,
The world might not have won their stay near Arthur's hall.

Now nigh the King the gentle youth advanc'd, 71
And to his hands the wondrous charge consign'd ;
Told how its secret properties enhanc'd
Its outward excellence, and then rejoin'd ;
' Sire, let each fair who now adorns your court, 75
' In turn assay the adventure to achieve ;
' Who best shall speed, nor find it long nor short,
' Let her, so wills my dame, alone receive,
' Fit guerdon of her worth, the mantle brave :—
' This is the nameless boon, the boon you freely gave.' 80

Sore chaf'd King Arthur now, and seem'd to see
Much lurking mischief in his promise made ;
Inly he fum'd, in moody reverie,
Till thus at length the sage Sir Gawaine said :
' Sire, since your word is past, 'twere meet you send, 85
' And bid your royal consort to the hall ;
' Let her with all her comely train attend,
' Damsel and dame, to try this wondrous pall.'
' Go then,' the King replied, ' our consort bring ;
' Sacred should be the word, the promise, of a king.' 90

So to the Queen the sage Sir Gawaine hies,
 As one who conn'd his lesson passing well,
 And fair salutes, and paints how fair a prize
 The King decrees the worthiest bonnibell;
 But of those passing virtues nought to tell 95
 Which lay conceal'd within the mystick pall
 He well aviz'd, for sure that searching spell
 Had scar'd these gentle dames from Arthur's hall:
 Now to the royal presence all are sped,
 A blithe and buxom band, their sovereign at their head: 100

And Arthur now, who deem'd it shame full sore
 To be so cozen'd by that crafty boy,
 The gorgeous pall unfolding on the floor,
 Thus briefly spake, with looks of little joy:
 ' High dames and fair ! to her of all the train 105
 ' Whose shape this curious mantle best may fit,
 ' To her 'tis doom'd of right to appertain,
 ' And may some mighty blessing wend with it !'
 So spake the King ; the mantle all admir'd ;
 And first, as first in place, the Queen the proof requir'd. 110

In luckless hour she first requir'd the proof,
 And o'er her shoulders first the mantle flung;
 For all too short before it shrunk aloof,
 Albe a length of train behind there hung;
 Thereat Sir Ewaine, good King Urien's son, 115
 Who spied this sovereign lady chang'd in hue,
 And she who ween'd some secret shame was won,
 Such loudly-buzzing laughter thence there grew;
 Thus turn'd the shrewd surmisings of the rest;
 For ill he bore the Queen should be her subjects' jest: 120

' Leave, lady dear, that mantle, all too short
 ' For stately mien and stature straight like thine,
 ' And let this damsel here, the next in court,
 ' Around her dainty limbs the prize entwine.'
 Hector-the-son's fair friend the lass was hight; 125
 E'en as he spoke the pall she deftly raught,
 And round her cast; full jocund was her spright;
 But the shrewd cloak soon sham'd her all to nought:
 For, howsoe'er she turn, or stretch, or hale,
 Full half a foot or more its shrivell'd length would fail. 130

Of all the knights who grac'd King Arthur's board
For flouting jests Sir Kay was most renown'd ;
Nor might he now refrain his wanton word,
But to the Queen would every whit expound.
So, gently bending to his sovereign's ear, 135
' Great Queen,' he whisper'd, ' mirrour of all grace,
' Thy loyalty excels this damsel's here.'—
' Sir Kay !' the Queen replied, ' unfold the case :
' This strange device I will thou straight declare,
' And why this wayward cloak hath left our skirts so bare.'

Therewith Sir Kay recounts the varlet's tale ; 141
From end to end the venom'd sleight he told :
Nought did the Queen of sage advisement fail
To bear with gree where little boots to scold ;
And, well she ween'd, as one aggriev'd to rail, 145
Would but the more their piteous plight unfold,
So loud exclaims, ' What silly wight would quail
' At Mourgue the fay's devices, known of old ?
' Come, damsels all, partake the fairy's jest,
' And see who first in place may bide this gamesome test.'

And, as she spake, the Seneschal Sir Kay, 151
Who joy'd to see these dames so ill bested,
Cries, ' On, fair lasses ! gladly greet the day
' That showers such honour on each loyal head :
' Now be it known how tender and how true 155
' These looks of love, and breasts of ivory pure ;
' Now may those knights, so sad for lack of you,
' With fresh delight their patient pains endure.'
So spake Sir Kay ; the damsels one and all
Now wish'd them far away escap'd from Arthur's hall. 160

Their sorry cheer, their looks deject and wan,
Did move the monarch's noble heart to ruth ;
Thence to that stripling page he thus began ;—
' This cloak meseems most vilely made, in sooth :
' For aught I read, there wons not here in court 165
' One dame or damsel, be she low or tall,
' But finds this luckless garment long or short :
' Hence—bear it back !—it suits not here at all.'
' Ah sire ! your word is pass'd ;' the youth replied ;
' The promise of a king must evermore abide.' 170

What needs it further stretch my tale's extent,
To tell how fail'd each dame, and fum'd each knight?
How Kay's o'erweening mirth was fitly shent
When his frail spouse betook herself to flight :
Or how Sir Ydier's paramour so bright, 175
(Sir Ydier, doubtless she of all was chaste,)
With that quaint garb in front full fairly dight,
Behind was scarcely clad beneath the waist :
Or how 'twas whisper'd in Sir Ydier's ear,
' Right well the dame is vail'd whose hinder parts appear.'

In fine, upon a bench, all wo-begone, 181
These luckless ladies side by side were plac'd ;
In all that crowded court there was not one
But more or less she found herself disgrac'd.
Whereat the stripling varlet loudly cried, 185
As well aviz'd none there the pall might claim,
' I pray thee, sire ! be every chamber tried,
' Lest some perchance there lurk of purer fame ;
' For so alone 'tis given me to fulfil
' As fits in every point my sovereign lady's will.' 190

With that the King commission'd Girflet straight :
In every nook and crevice Girflet pried :
Yet, though his peering search he nought would bate,
One only damsel hath his zeal espied ;
And she, for ailment fain in bed to bide, 195
Excuse did plead, for that her strength was spent ;
But he, forsooth, might not be so denied ;
There would he be till she her clothes had hent :
No help the damsel saw, she needs must go ;
So to the hall she pass'd with feeble steps and slow. 200

Her mate was there, the foremost wight in hall :
His name to learn perchance might please you well :
'Twas Karados Brise-Bras, approv'd of all
A good and hardy knight, the sooth to tell.
Soon as he spied his mistress enter in, 205
As doom'd that dire adventure to assay,
Through all his frame he felt a war begin,
His face with crimson stain'd, his heart like clay ;
And, for her absence glad of spright whilere,
So now his troubled sense was overwhelm'd with fear. 210

' Dear lady mine !' (he thus was heard to say,)
 ' If aught misgives thee, shun that baleful robe !
 ' To see thy shame, to feel my love decay,
 ' I would not bide for all this earthly globe :
 ' Far better were it aye in doubt remain, 215
 ' Than read the truth by such disastrous test ;
 ' Than see thee now thy sex's honour stain,
 ' And marshall'd there on bench, the vulgar jest.'
 ' Nay, why so sore torment thee ?' Girflet cried,
 ' Lo, there two hundred sit, so lately deified.' 220

The loyal damsel, ne'er a whit dismay'd,
 Around her neck the mantle boldly threw ;
 The same so meetly all her limbs array'd,
 No seamstress e'er might make it half so true :
 Whereat the stripling page did loudly cry 225
 ' Now, lady fair ! thy lover joy betide !
 ' Thine be the pall, who winn'st the victory !
 ' Thine be the pall ! thy virtue well is tried !'
 E'en as he spoke the King declar'd assent ;
 The rest with feigned scorn would vail their discontent. 230

But for Sir Karados, the damsel's friend,
Him glad of heart I read as man might be ;
Forth with the mantle straight that pair did wend,
And choicely priz'd, and hoarded charily.
Since then, whenas both these were dead and gone, 235
It close was stow'd where none the place might see,
Nor lives there wight on earth but I alone,
Of power, sweet cousin mine, to shew it thee.
Avize thee then ; for, should ye crave the test,
Thou or thy friends so fair may presently be dress'd. 240

But should it chance the wiser counsel seem
In its dark den to let it slumber still,
There shall it bide ; which way soe'er thou deem,
Thy wish alone can rule my yielding will ;
For bent am I, and shall for aye remain, 245
So long as life within this frame may stay,
To count thy friendship as my greatest gain,
To strive how best I may thy will obey.
But should the pall some whit too scanty prove,
In sooth, sweet cousin mine, I might not leave to love. 250

And thus, meseems, the tale is fully done,
Save that I fail'd that damsel's name to tell
Whose worth of yore the perlous mantle won ;
Known be it then that peerless bonnibell
Was clep'd of all ——— so stay thee, story mine ! 355
Come, bear around a brimmed bowl of wine !



The Mule without a Bridle.

BY PAYSANS DE MAISIERES.



THE MULE WITHOUT A BRIDLE.

It was the holy feast of Whitsuntide,
When Arthur will'd in royal state reside,
And where proud Carduel's battlements arise
Hold his high court with due solemnities.

Straight through each province the wide bruit was known,
And every chief resorted to the throne; 6

High dames, and doughty knights, a numerous host,
Whate'er of worthiness the land could boast,
All came, obedient to their sovereign's word,
And dignified the prince they all ador'd. 10

Now one day's joy was past, and every guest
Was rising from the second noon-tide feast,

When from afar a damsel was descried,
Slow toward the castle gate she seem'd to ride,
A goodly mule her graceful form sustain'd, 15
Unbitted was his mouth, his neck unrein'd.
The King, the Queen, with all their court, admir'd,
And tedious grew their time, with vain conjecture tir'd ;
Till, as the damsel now approach'd more nigh,
Her youth, her opening charms, struck every eye ; 20
Swift flies to meet her many a youthful knight,
Bends at her knee, and helps her to alight :
Their courtesies with mournful cheer she bore,
For sorrow, as it seem'd, had struck her sore ;
And many a tear, fast trickling down her cheek, 25
Shew'd heaviness of soul that ill could bear to speak.
Onward she mov'd, the obsequious knights precede,
And to the presence of their sovereign lead :
Then, while through all expectant wonder ran,
Her weeping eyes she dried, and thus began. 30
 ' Pardon, great sire, a wretch who dares intrude
 ' To damp with ill-tim'd sadness others' good :
 ' Wrong'd as I am, and doom'd to rue the day
 ' When my mule's bridle first was borne away,
 ' Still, still I wail, nor shall my sorrows end 35
 ' Till my long wanderings lead me to a friend,

‘ A friend whose sword that bridle shall regain ;
‘ To him my love I vow, the guerdon of his pain.
‘ And know, this fearful enterprize to try
‘ Asks the full might of hardiest chivalry : 40
‘ Whither shall hardiest chivalry resort,
‘ Or where be found, if not in Arthur’s court ?
‘ List then, great sovereign, to a damsel’s prayers !
‘ And may that man who, past his brethren, dares,
‘ Stand forth my champion, and the deed assay ; 45
‘ No guide he needs to regulate his way ;
‘ Him to the scene of strife the mule shall lead,
‘ And may his conquering arms receive the promis’d meed !’

She ceas’d ; to claim the emprise all seem’d to turn,
But most the Seneschal was seen to burn ; 50
Sir Kay the Seneschal first seeks the throne,
And arrogates the achievement for his own.
First were his claims, and could not be gainsaid ;
Forthwith he turns him to the stranger maid,
And vows, though from the world’s extremest shore, 55
The long-lost rein uninjur’d to restore ;
Yet hopes, dear earnest of his future bliss,
His lips may steal one spirit-stirring kiss.
The cautious fair, retiring with disdain,
Forbids all freedom till he bring the rein ; 60

Yet, lest her knight desponding should depart,
 Then she confirms for his her person and her heart.
 Officious to comply, low louts Sir Kay,
 Girds on his glittering arms, and speeds away.

Scarce had the neighbouring forest's shadowy height 65
 Clos'd in its womb the mule-bestridding knight,
 When, gaunt with famine, and athirst for blood,
 Pards, tigers, and the lions' griesly brood,
 In droves burst forth from that disastrous laire,
 And with loud hideous roarings fill'd the air. 70

Wo worth the champion now, who sore afraid
 Bewail'd that heedless boast so lately made :
 Fled was all hope of meed, all promis'd bliss ;
 Vain in his sight the fairest fair one's kiss :
 Till, as the insatiate monsters reach'd the mule, 75
 At once the roar was hush'd, the rage grew cool ;
 Couch'd at his hoof each suppliant savage lay,
 And with his rough tongue lick'd the dust away,
 Then slunk back trembling to his drear abode :
 Sir Kay, reviv'd in heart, pursued his road. 80

'Scap'd from the beasts of prey, in hope secur'd,
 New terrors yet remain'd to be endur'd.
 The track now steeply shelving form'd a vale,
 Whose gloom might make the stoutest knight turn pale.

'Twas darkness all ; save that at times the breath 85
Of fiery dragons, pestilent as death,
Flash'd in upon the obscurity of night
With lurid blasts of intermitting light,
By momentary fits the pathway show'd,
And led the astonish'd warrior on his road. 90
In the deep bottom of this hideous dell
Swarm'd snakes, a countless brood, and scorpions fell.
Above, the unfetter'd tempest rav'd amain,
And in a deafening torrent pour'd the rain :
Shook to their centre by the whirlwind's sweep 95
Huge rocky fragments thunder'd down the steep :
Keen was the cold, as in one piercing wind
A thousand icy winters blew combin'd ;
Yet such the emotions of the champion's heart,
Fast flow'd the dews of sweat from every part : 100
Him, howsoever, the guardian mule convey'd
Safe through the perils of the dreadful glade,
And, onward pacing, reach'd at length the marge
Of a black doleful river, deep and large.
Slow roll'd the sullen waves, nor aught was there 105
Of bridge or bark the adventurous knight to bear :
Shap'd like a plank, and stretching many a rood,
Alone one bar of iron spann'd the flood.

Here paus'd Sir Kay, here deem'd all valour vain,
Here turn'd his mule, despairing of the rein. 110
Back through the vale perforce his passage lay,
Back through the vale he hied with sore dismay ;
Back through the forest, wild with many a beast
That howl'd behind, as baffled of their feast :
In vain they sprang ; the mule's repulsive charm 115
Shrank up their strength, and sav'd the knight from harm.

Now from afar the assembled court beheld
Their champion slowly pacing o'er the field :
His downcast looks his ill success confess'd,
And each was prompt to taunt him with a jest. 120
The King himself stepp'd forth his knight to lead
On to the plighted kiss, the conqueror's meed ;
Knights, squires, and dames, the general banter caught,
And mock'd the unlucky Seneschal to nought.
Speechless awhile he stood, the sport of all, 125
Then hid his face and hurried from the hall.

Wo was Sir Kay ; but in more deep despair
Sunk, at this scene, the disappointed fair.
Cast from all hope, what bitter tears she shed !
How rent the clustering honours of her head ! 130
Mov'd with her wail, advanc'd Sir Gawaine forth ;
Calm he approach'd her, confident of worth ;

Pledg'd his true word to seek the scene of strife,
And in her cause devote his sword and life.
Such promise sure some recompense might claim, 135
Nor tinge the purest fair one's cheek with shame?
'Twas that foretaste the Seneschal had press'd;
And what that was, he ween'd the lady guess'd.
The damsel blush'd: the dangerous warfare known,
All hope of succour thence more desperate grown, 140
Who could refuse to knight so kind, so brave,
Aught that a manly modesty would crave?
Known be it then, the inspiring kiss was seiz'd;
Blithe was the knight, nor was the maid displeas'd:
He mounts the mule, impatient of delay, 145
And hies him to the forest's side away.

Loud, as he pass'd, the bristling lions roar'd;
The knight with dauntless scorn oppos'd his sword:
Loud hiss'd the enormous snakes, and onward roll'd;
And for the fight prepar'd Sir Gawaine bold: 150
But needless all: the mule's o'ermastering might
Turn'd back the cowering suppliants from the knight.

Now on the margin of the stream he stood,
Where the huge bar lay stretch'd athwart the flood;
There for a moment paus'd in secret prayer, 155
Consign'd the event to Heaven's protecting care,

Then urg'd his mule : upon the bar's strait bound
The sure-pac'd beast full scanty footing found ;
While, rising fast, the watery waste beneath
Roll'd on its roaring billows, big with death ; 160
Dash'd o'er the knight, as conscious of a foe,
Then wide disparting yawn'd in hideous gulphs below.
Fix'd as a rock the assaulting surge he bore,
Slow mov'd the sure-pac'd mule, and gain'd the further shore.
 Hard by its bank a castle was descried, 165
With wondrous art contriv'd and fortified :
There rang'd, as palisades, in order due,
Four hundred beam-like stakes assail'd his view ;
Each on its pointed summit gory red
Bore high in air a mangled warriour's head, 170
Save one alone ; whose top, uncrown'd and pure,
Seem'd to demand that ghastly garniture.
Girt were the fortress' walls with moats profound,
And brimming torrents roll'd impetuous round ;
Whilst, like a millstone, on its central base 175
Revolv'd with ceaseless course the whole enormous mass ;
Swift as a top, when some impatient boy
With frequent lash speeds on the circling toy.
Bridge there was none, whereon he might assay
To vault with dexterous bound, and force his future way.

Long time he gaz'd, and fix'd his mind to die 181

Rather than back return with infamy :

Still scann'd the towers that never ceas'd to turn,

As bent some gate, some entrance, to discern.

One pass he spies : the goaded mule he galls, 185

Leaps the wide moat, and lights within the walls.

Within, no creature, as it seem'd, remain'd ;

Waste solitude and deathlike silence reign'd.

Unpeopled windows, vacant streets, declare

Strange recent cause of desolation there. 190

Long mus'd the knight : at length he chanc'd to spy

A dwarf who mark'd his course with curious eye.

' Where won,' Sir Gawaine cries, ' thy lord, thy dame ?

' Report their will, their honours, and their name ?'

Eager he spoke ; the silent dwarf withdrew ; 195

The knight pursued, and bore his quarry still in view ;

When from a craggy cave, his dark abode,

Foul and deform'd a monstrous giant strode ;

Deform'd his limbs, and bristly was his hair,

And in his hand a ponderous axe he bare ; 200

Yet still his looks some courtesy express'd,

As thus the dauntless Gawaine he address'd.

' Praise to thy courage, desperate knight !' he cried,

' Though here that courage be but ill applied :

' Those griesly heads which palisade the gate 205
 ' Might well have made thee wise ere yet too late ;
 ' 'Twill pity me, in sooth, to see thee fall,
 ' For know, this enterprize is death to all.
 ' Take, ne'ertheless, such helps as I can give,
 ' And feast the little time thou hast to live.' 210

He spake, and straight convey'd his wondering guest
 Where the pil'd table bow'd beneath the feast,
 And with a kindly coarse solicitude
 Will'd him restore his wasted powers with food ;
 Then to a bower for rest prepar'd, he leads 215
 The dauntless knight, and thus again proceeds.
 ' There sleep, Sir Knight ! yet ere thou press thy bed
 ' Smite from my shoulders broad my towering head ;
 ' Nor shall this bounty lack the destin'd meed,
 ' Myself to-morrow will repay thy deed.' 220

Swift, as he spoke, Sir Gawaine whirl'd his blade,
 And at his feet the griesly mass was laid :
 What words can paint his wonder, to behold,
 As the huge head along the pavement roll'd,
 The trunk pursue, the sever'd parts unite, 225
 And the whole man pass suddenly from sight.

Calm on the fearful scene Sir Gawaine gaz'd,
 For stedfast was his soul, though much amaz'd ;

And, at the morrow's menace nought dismay'd,
Calm on a couch his wearied limbs he laid; 230
There gathering slumber soon o'erspreads his eyes,
And lapt in sweet tranquillity he lies.

Now rose the morn, and, to his promise true,
Nigh with his ponderous axe the giant drew,
And warn'd the knight, still stretch'd upon his bed, 235
To yield the plighted forfeit of his head :
Nor paus'd the knight; superiour to his fate,
His word was pledg'd, he scorn'd to hesitate ;
When lo ! with alter'd guise, that joy confess'd,
The griesly monster clasp'd him to his breast, 240
And, ' fair befall thy hardiment ! ' he cried,
' 'Twas but to prove thy manhood :—thou art tried.'
' Say then,' the knight return'd, ' doth aught remain ?
' Where lies my way ? what bars me from the rein ?'
' Ere the sun sink,' the giant stern replied, 245
' All may be known, and thou be satisfied ;
' Meanwhile thine hour of utmost need is nigh,
' Call all thy valour forth, prevail, or die.'

'Twas now full noon; and in the field of fight
Arm'd at all points arriv'd the dauntless knight : 250
Fix'd on the opposing quarter of the plain
A lion, mad with anger, gnash'd his chain ;

Smear'd were his jaws with foam, the earth he tore,
And the wide plain resounded with his roar :
Anon the advancing warrior met his view, 255
His chains fell off, and on his foe he flew ;
On his broad shoulder fix'd the cumbrous beast,
And tugg'd, and tore the hauberk from his breast.
Long was the fight, a fearful tale to tell ;
Suffice to say the enormous savage fell : 260
More huge, more fierce, a second straight succeeds ;
Beneath the champion's arm a second bleeds :
Then further foe came not : the knight again
Demands the conqueror's meed, the destin'd rein.
The giant answers nought, but leads his guest 265
Where the pil'd table bends beneath the feast,
And with a clumsy kindness, oft renew'd,
Relates how faltering nature thrives by food ;
Then reconducts him to the field of fight,
And brings his foeman forth, a bold but ruthless knight. 270
E'en he it was, whose yet unvanquish'd hand
Had fenc'd with many a stake the castled strand,
And, in dire proof his might was peerless found,
Their points with slaughter'd warriors' heads had crown'd :
Now with Sir Gawaine doom'd his force to try, 275
And strive once more for death or victory,

For each their grim conductor bids prepare
A stately steed, caparison'd for war.
The champions mount, each grasps a beamy spear ;
Each adverse wheels to take his full career ; 280
At once impell'd the forceful steeds advance,
Bursts the strong girth, and snaps the shivering lance,
And sells and knights are backward borne to dust,
So firm they sat, so furious was their thrust.
Uprise the prostrate foes in ireful mood, 285
And fierce the combat burns, on foot renew'd.
Aloft in air their ponderous swords they wield,
And sparks of fire flash thick from either shield :
With the fell dint their batter'd arms resound,
Yet neither chief grows slack, nor yields his ground. 290
For two long hours the twain with equal might
Maintain'd the dubious issue of the fight,
Till at the last, as if that stroke combin'd
The united energy of all his mind,
Full on his foeman's casque Sir Gawaine's blade 295
Resistless driven, a wasteful entrance made ;
Down to the circlet clave the griding steel,
And prone on earth the senseless warrior fell.
So ceas'd the fight ; for knighthood's laws decree
Death's instant dole, or yielded victory : 300

And now the conqueror's hand had nigh unlac'd
The well-wrought bands with which his helm was brac'd,
When the faint knight confess'd the unequal strife,
Gave up his vanquish'd sword, and begg'd for life.

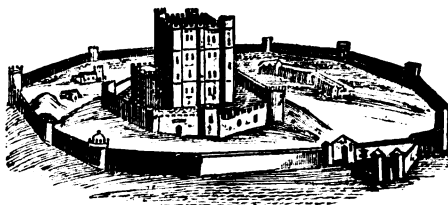
Here clos'd the achievement; the victorious knight 305
Now claims the rein by uncontested right :
But the fair mistress of the waste domain
Still hopes from beauty what from force was vain,
And trusts by amorous gallantry to find
Those claims relinquish'd and that right resign'd. 310

Fill'd with these views the attendant dwarf she sends ;
Before the knight the dwarf respectful bends ;
Kind greetings bears as to his lady's guest,
And prays his presence to adorn her feast.
The knight delays not : on a bed design'd 315
With gay magnificence the fair reclin'd ;
High o'er her head, on silver columns rais'd,
With broidering gems her proud pavilion blaz'd.
Herself, a paragon in every part,
Seem'd sovereign beauty deck'd with comeliest art. 320
With a sweet smile of condescending pride
She seats the courteous Gawaine by her side,
Scans with assiduous glance each rising wish,
Feeds from her food, the partner of her dish,

With soft reproach extols his conquering sword, 325
Calls him her dear destroyer and her lord,
Tells how herself, and she, the maid forlorn,
Sprang from one sire, of one dear mother born,
Owns that her hand the fatal prize detain'd,
Now by her guest's unrivall'd arm regain'd; 330
Till, weening well his bosom prepossess'd
With her smooth wiles, she thus the knight address'd :
' Sweet lord !' she cried, ' still pass thine hours with me !
' Nor press too far the claims of victory !
' Mark this imperial castle's vast design ; 335
' Twice twenty more, save two alone, are mine :
' Take these, with all their wealth, these wide domains,
' And hold their sovereign's heart in willing chains :
' Prize to a lord for bravery passing peer,
' She deems it honour to submit her here ; 340
' How lost soe'er, she shuns the thought of wo,
' And finds in thee a guardian, not a foe.'
She paus'd ; the stedfast champion nothing swerv'd,
But the firm purpose of his soul preserv'd :
By beauty uneduc'd, unbrib'd by gain, 345
Calm he persists to claim the long-sought rein.
The long-sought rein reluctantly restor'd,
Again the sure-pac'd mule sustains its lord :

When, as he mounts, amaz'd at once he hears
Strange shouts of clamorous joy assail his ears : 350
Sad wights were these, and guiltless doom'd to die
Beneath their dame's capricious tyranny;
For through her streets, so will'd her wayward mood,
Fierce lions daily roam'd, and sought their food;
Hence, to his house as to a jail confin'd, 355
Each timorous wretch in lonely want had pin'd;
Now, freed from fear, they throng the castled strand,
Prompt to embrace their bless'd deliverer's hand.

To Carduel's towers return'd, with wild delight
The enraptur'd damsel hails her conquering knight : 360
Just to his toils her willing tribute pays
Of thankfulness unfeign'd, and boundless praise.
Soon, howsoe'er, she casts to speed away;
Nor Arthur nor his Queen can win her stay :
Much they entreat her to remain their guest 365
Till the full period of the days of feast,
But all in vain; the damsel quits the hall,
Mounts on her mule, and bids farewell to all.



The Knight and the Sword.



THE KNIGHT AND THE SWORD.

Who seeks for solace ? who delights in joy ?
With me his listless hours shall find employ !
Haste all, with heedful ears ! while I recite
The strange adventure of a peerless knight ;
Whose soul all cowards and their deeds abhorr'd ; 5
High was his honour, deadly was his sword ;
Sworn foe to traitors ; without fear or shame
He liv'd and died : Sir Gawaine was his name.

In Carduel's walls, retir'd from proud parade,
With his fair Queen the monarch Arthur stay'd ; 10
Some chosen knights around their sovereign stood,
And good Sir Gawaine, of the royal blood.

And now came on the spring-time of the year ;
Mild was the air, the sky was lovely clear ;
Charm'd with the scene, the prince his steed bestrode, 15
And, unattended, to the forest rode ;
At ease he far'd, nor cas'd his limbs in steel ;
His spurs of well-wrought gold adorn'd his heel,
Girt with his sword, and in his hand a lance,
His shield alone he bore to ward disastrous chance. 20
The beauties of the calm unclouded sky,
The various birds' delightful melody,
And the fresh fragrance of the teeming earth
Where every moment gave new verdure birth,
So sooth'd the knight, so won upon his soul, 25
That his steed rov'd at will, without control :
He, rapt the while in ruminating muse,
Thoughts, such as vagrant fancy forms, pursues.
Rous'd at the last, disquieted and vex'd
He scans the wood with various paths perplex'd ; 30
With fruitless diligence retracks his way,
Till sunk the westering sun, and clos'd the day ;
Then various paths assays, the sport of chance,
Nor knows which ways recede, nor which advance.
Long had he wander'd, when from far he sees 35
A ruddy blaze that gleam'd betwixt the trees :

Led by the friendly flame, he shapes his course
Where to a tree was bound a warrior horse ;
Not far beside there sat a stranger knight,
Close to a fire, conspicuous by its light. 40
With courteous guise Sir Gawaine prays him tell
Where lies the road to princely Carduel :
With equal courtesy the knight replied ;
And, when day break, desir'd to be his guide,
Would but the wandering warrior rest the while, 45
And there the night's dull hours with him beguile.
The assenting Gawaine wraps his mantle round,
And seats him by the stranger on the ground :
Of nature loyal, and of temper free,
His converse paints his heart's integrity; 50
But all to guile the stranger's mind was bent :
Soon shall my audience learn his base intent.

Much they discours'd, then sunk in slumber lay
Till the first rays of morn proclaim'd the day :
' 'Tis far to Carduel,' then the stranger cried, 55
' And fasting hast thou pass'd the eventide :
' Hard by the forest's verge my castle stands,
' There let us seek what nature's waste demands ;
' There take such food as favouring chance may send,
' Given with the cordial welcome of a friend,' 60

His specious words in Gawaine wrought consent ;
Both warriors cross'd their steeds, and onward went.

Thus friendly journeying, they had scarcely pass'd
The outmost borders of the woody waste,
When, as they talk'd, the stranger knight express'd 65
Desire to lead the way, and to announce his guest :
' Sir Knight,' quoth he, ' since, as it chanc'd, alone,
' I lack due means to make thy presence known ;
' Grace let me find, if, some few moments lost,
' I now fulfil this duty of a host. 70
' Thou seest where yonder lofty mountain's brow
' O'erhangs and terminates the dale below ;
' That towering pile which on its summit stands,
' Is mine ; 'tis there I wait my friend's commands.'
Ere well the words were past, he prick'd his steed, 75
And urg'd him to his utmost powers of speed :
The generous confidence of Gawaine's mind
Trusts his fair semblance, following slow behind.

On a wide down, at distance from the wood,
Guards of their flock four shepherd rusticks stood ; 80
Sir Gawaine pass'd not unregardful by,
But spoke them fair with looks of courtesy ;
His princely mien, his salutation kind,
With sympathy inspir'd each clownish hind ;

' Fair sire !' his passing ear perceiv'd them cry, 85
' Wo worth the time ! you seek your destiny.'
The voice he heard, but yet he mark'd it nought,
Till, as he mus'd, his mind revolves the thought:
Now, dubious grown, his course he backward bends,
To learn what hap that luckless cry portends. 90

With frank simplicity the hinds relate
That many a knight had pass'd that castle's gate,
Many had enter'd in, but none return'd ;
This they had seen, and therefore had they mourn'd.
But how those knights had far'd, or what befell, 95
Nought but of vagrant rumour could they tell.
'Twas nois'd, that yonder pile's imperious lord
Could brook no gainsaying in deed or word ;
That 'twas his custom, by vexatious proof,
When drawn by fraud or fortune to his roof, 100
To grieve the soul of each defenceless guest,
Till his worn patience shrunk beneath the test ;
Then, should he aught resist, or aught deny,
Seal'd was his doom, the luckless wretch must die.

Strange was the shepherds' tale, and full of ruth, 105
And told with the simplicity of truth :
Awhile Sir Gawaine, wavering in his mind,
Thence to return and shun the assay inclin'd ;

Yet was he well aware what faith was due
To rumour's voice, malicious and untrue : 110
Scorn, more than all, that thus he might afford
Cause to impeach his unsuspected word,
Impell'd him on ; nor could he brook to hear
That once in life he had acknowledg'd fear :
Before these thoughts all danger fades away, 115
And on he fares the adventure to assay.

Now, nigh at hand, he views the fortress' gate,
His wish'd approach the numerous menials wait ;
Foremost their lord, with looks that joy express'd,
Stood, prompt to greet and to assist his guest ; 120
Himself was first to curb the warrior's steed,
And from his arms himself the warrior freed ;
On pass'd the pair like brethren, hand in hand,
To a proud hall magnificently plann'd ;
Then, while the hastening feast employ'd his train, 125
Thus spake with generous air the castellan.
' Fair sir,' he cried, ' deem yours whate'er you see,
' Here take your ease, and live at liberty ;
' Should aught displease, unmeet should aught appear,
' Use your free will, and reign sole master here.' 130
Smiling he spoke, and for a while retir'd ;
Mute was his guest, and with a smile admir'd ;

Much on his mind the shepherds' warnings hung,
And fear to give offence restrain'd his tongue.
Back to the hall the castelain repairs, 135
And in his hand his beauteous daughter bears,
And thus bespeaks the love-inspiring maid,
'Heed this my guest, and be his will obey'd.'
Then, lest constraint or listlessness should bind
The knight's free converse, and control his mind, 140
The sire, retreating as he clos'd the charge,
Leaves without ward the youthful pair at large.

His words, his conduct, more than all the rest
His damsel's charms, disturb'd Sir Gawaine's breast :
Amaz'd awhile he stands in speechless muse, 145
Of counsel void, unweeting what to choose :
Stak'd with the daughter of his wayward host,
Too cold, too courteous, life might be the cost.
With cautious language and embarrass'd air
He sues the maid to grant a warriour's prayer, 150
Implores permission to be nam'd her knight,
And consecrates his sword to guard her right.

The prince was circumspect, the maid was young,
Yet sure his conscious eyes betray'd his tongue ;
For through perplexity's mysterious shade 155
She read the conquest that her charms had made :

Nor had the warriour's nobleness of air
Miss'd its full influence on the enamour'd fair ;
Chill fear alone her struggling soul repress'd,
And froze the important secrets of her breast ; 160
But love's superiour powers at last prevail,
And from her trembling lips extort the tale.
Bound by an oath's inviolable tie,
The prince now learns his dangerous destiny.
' Beware !' she cries, ' nor contradict my sire !' 165
' Beware, sweet friend ! for deadly is his ire :
' Nor, by the language of his lips beguil'd,
' Ask, in ill hour, obedience of his child.
' Had those smooth words seduc'd thy looks to show
' Aught like commandment, thou hadst died ere now.' 170
She ceas'd ; for now return'd the mansion's lord,
To lead the warriour to the festive board :
' Whene'er,' quoth he, ' by favouring chance I find
' A guest who thwarts me not, but reads my mind,
' Just to his worth, o'er mine that man may claim 175
' Their lord's prerogative of praise or blame.'
So speaking, meats, from every dish the best,
Largely he culls, and proffers to his guest ;
Deep draughts between from copious bowls supplied,
Given with an air not us'd to be denied ; 180

And still with many a question, many a word,
 If aught in chief his curious taste preferr'd :
 But vain these sleights the fraudulent master tries ;
 Sir Gawaine freely feeds, but nought replies :
 (By looks, besure, by gestures, he conveys 185
 Large thankfulness, and universal praise :)
 Nor swerves he aught, when, as the banquet ends,
 His daughter's hand the liberal sire extends,
 And wills the roseate maid's unsullied charms
 Should grace the warriour's couch and bless his arms : 190
 With full content the prince receives the prize,
 Yet only thanks with language of his eyes.

Now mounts the castelain his stately steed,
 And hies him to the greenwood side with speed,
 For 'twas his custom'd course to linger there, 195
 And court, like errant knight, adventures rare.
 Yet, ere he parts, he warns his guest to wait ;
 Patient to bide within the castle's gate,
 On pain of death : within those precincts free
 With his fair mate to sport at liberty ; 200
 For 'twas his joy that guests at ease should live,
 And lack no pastime he or his could give.

Struck with the interdict, in wonder lost
 At the contrarious conduct of his host,

The prince stood mute ; his wit no clue might find 205
To such brute force and courtesy combin'd.
Yet for his gallant soul was nobly true,
He lean'd to vindicate the stranger's too ;
Nor would he think that one who unconstrain'd
So much besought, so largely entertain'd, 210
Beneath this guise of bountihead profess'd
Could traitorously plot against his guest.

The softer maid, with worse disquiet wrung,
Forethought the dole that o'er her warrior hung :
Fain would she guess, and fain would she reveal, 215
Each secret snare, each lurking danger tell ;
All that she might, with oft-repeated care
She paints her sire's caprice, and warns the knight beware.

'Twas night ; and in the hall the banquet smil'd ;
There sat the prince, the father, and his child : 220
Then once again, importunately press'd,
Feeds to the full the unresisting guest.
Then too, as now the festive board was clear'd,
He hears, yet scarce believes that he has heard,
The sire enjoin his menial train to spread 225
There, for himself to rest, some homelier bed,
That his own couch, with costliest care array'd,
Might lull the stranger knight and rosy maid.

Dumb was the prince, he scarcely seem'd to breathe ;
Accepted or refus'd he ween'd it death : 230
Nor for his answer paus'd the menial train ;
On to the bower they lead the lovers twain :
Within the bower twelve waxen torches blaze,
And o'er the damsel shed resistless rays ;
While many a stern command constrains the knight, 235
Lest wariness should quench their dangerous light :
Thus bound, thus tempted, it behov'd him bide,
And dare the eventful proof, whate'er betide :
Clos'd was the door, the massy key was turn'd,
And lovely look'd the maid, and bright the tapers burn'd,
And down she lay, as one to sleep resign'd, 241
And gently by her side the knight reclin'd.

Who might have seen what now Sir Gawaine saw,
Nor felt the imperious power of nature's law ?
When straight these words his wayward fancies marr'd—
'Beware !—I lie not here without a guard.'— 246
Amaz'd, incredulous, his curious eyes
He casts around, but nought of guard espies ;
Till his fair mate directs his wondering sight
To a sword pendent from the window's height : 250
'That blade,' quoth she, 'by strong enchantment's power
'Keeps watch and ward o'er this mysterious bower !

- ‘ Here must each wight, whom favouring fate may guide
- ‘ Safe through the numerous snares thyself hast tried,
- ‘ Here must each wight, by custom most abhorr’d, 255
- ‘ Meet the last deadliest proof my sire has stor’d.
- ‘ Scarce may his will, by powerful fancy caught,
- ‘ Forget those precepts temperate foresight taught,
- ‘ Ere from its sheath the steel spontaneous flies,
- ‘ And the wretch bleeds, a certain sacrifice. 260
- ‘ Full twenty knights, all boon, as thou mayst be,
- ‘ Have press’d this sad funereal couch with me :
- ‘ Alas! of all this train not one survives !
- ‘ All paid the piteous forfeit with their lives !
- ‘ Now, sweet my lord! for grace forbear to prove 265
- ‘ These dire effects of disadventurous love !
- ‘ Nor swell these eyes, that dread to see the day,
- ‘ With tears which death alone shall wipe away!’

The damsel ceas’d ; the knight, with new surprise,
 Fix’d on her glowing charms his wistful eyes : 270
 So strange adventure ne’er before he knew,
 So passing strange he scarce may ween it true ;
 Half doubts, the maid this quaint device may try
 As the last wile of dexterous modesty :
 And now, resolv’d the prodigy to dare, 275
 He mov’d more nigh : then shriek’d aloud the fair :

Down, like a bolt of thunder, shot the blade,
 Stridulous down, and fearful entrance made :
 Back to its sheath spontaneous up it pass'd :
 Sir Gawaine speechless lay, like wight aghast : 280
 ' Ah me ! ' with mild reproach the damsel cried,
 ' Why were my friendly warnings thus defied !
 ' Bless'd, howsoe'er, thy favouring fates dispense
 ' Slight wounds, proportion'd to thy slight offence.
 ' Admonish'd thus, thy wild desires control, 285
 ' And with the dews of slumber still thy soul.'

Fain would the prince his lady's hests fulfil,
 But that the treacherous tapers warp'd his will ;
 Full on her dainty form they shed their light,
 Nor mark'd the sword the offences of the sight : 290
 To dolorous penance doom'd, he yet awhile
 Brav'd the full blaze, that shone but to beguile ;
 But who can aye ?—constraint, commandment, fail'd,
 And nature's sovereign power again prevail'd.
 ' What gibes ! ' he cried, ' what scorn ! should e'er report.
 ' Bear the strange tale to royal Arthur's court, 296
 ' How, scar'd by danger thus, their craven knight
 ' Shrank from adventure of such choice delight ;
 ' What dire derision, when 'tis told the sword
 ' Leap'd from its sheath, and fought without its lord ! 300

‘ Die ! better die ! ’——ere yet the warriour ends
Swift from its high abode the steel descends,
Through the thin air it whistled as it sped,
And once again it smote, again Sir Gawaine bled.

Well may ye ween, by such advisement taught, 305
The lusty knight now rein’d his wanton thought ;
While, whatsoe’er his musings might explore,
The flouts of Arthur’s court prevail’d no more.

So far’d the prince ; nor less the sire distress’d
Lack’d the sweet solace of unbroken rest ; 310
Stretch’d on his bed disquietly he lay,
And sought with longing eyes the dawn of day :
Then to the bower he sped, then wondering spied
The knight, yet living, by the damsel’s side.

‘ Now, by my troth,’ Sir Gawaine cries with glee, 315
‘ No death-deserving deed is done by me ! ’

Proud was Sir Gawaine of his sage conceit,
Till the shrewd coverlet bewray’d the cheat ;
Its texture rare with sightless rents defac’d,
Drew frank confession from his lips at last. 320

His name the meed secures ; the flower of fame
Who but has heard the peerless Gawaine’s name ?
To this in homage bends the castle’s lord ;
‘ Here ends,’ he cried, ‘ the enchantment of the sword ! ’

' Thine be the damsel ;—in mine own despite 325
 ' Thy mastering fates I own, and thee the prowtest knight.
 ' Full many a brave one, doom'd to sue the maid,
 ' With his dear life the desperate price has paid ;
 ' Thee, thee alone, illustrious past compare,
 ' I read the wight predestin'd for the fair ; 330
 ' To thee pertains my daughter ; take her hand ;
 ' And with her this my castle and my land.'
 ' Gramercy, Sir ! the damsel may suffice,'
 The prince return'd ; ' I ask none other prize.'

Now through the land the buzzing rumour rife 335
 Told how the sword had spar'd one lover's life ;
 From every part in joyful crowds they hie,
 And the same day was held the feast of victory.
 There might be seen how royally the board
 From end to end with daintiest meats was stor'd : 340
 Next, how the banquet to disports gave way,
 The wide hall echoing with the minstrels' lay :
 This sounds the pipe, with that the flute prevails,
 These to the harp record their various tales ;
 This, reads romantick lore, and feats of blood ; 345
 That, fabling fancies penn'd in merrier mood :
 Some guests the while, as various likings sway,
 With tables or with chess beguile the day :

Nor ceas'd their cheer, till in the darkening west
The sun now sunk proclaim'd the hour of rest ; 350
Then all retire ; but first, with seemly state,
On the blithe pair the numerous menials wait ;
Straight to the bower the gallant prince they guide,
The self-same bower, the damsel by his side ;
Where, by the powerless sword no more dismay'd, 355
Nor mus'd he long, nor greatly she gainsaid.

Now fly the weeks amain : the jocund knight
Lies lapt in love, and dreams but of delight :
Care for his royal uncle's boding heart
Rous'd at the last, and warn'd him to depart ; 360
So long an absence well he ween'd might raise
Desponding doubts, and bitterness of days ;
Thus mov'd, he bids the castellain farewell,
And with his mistress parts for Carduel.
On a slim steed, with sumptuous trappings grac'd, 365
Her dainty form the beauteous lady plac'd ;
Hard by her side, and lightly arm'd, the same
As to her sire's abode whilere he came,
Her stout companion on his palfrey rode,
Well limb'd, and large of size, as best beseem'd its load.
So forth they issued ; when, in peevish haste, 371
Ere yet an hundred paces well were past,

The fair stopp'd short, and fretful all she pin'd
For her two favourite nurslings left behind,
Two darling dogs; while far away from home 375
Their reckless patroness was bent to roam.

Swift, as she spoke, the castle's opening gate,
With menials throng'd, beheld her hastening mate :
Back to the fair he spurs at utmost speed,
And, with the following fondlings, both proceed. 380

Now, o'er their heads extending far and wide,
The gloomy forest frown'd on every side :
Athwart their way a lonely knight there stood,
Arm'd at all points, and seem'd to guard the wood :
Scarce might the prince with courteous guise begin, 385
And greetings fair, to curb his palfrey in,
Ere the brute stranger prick'd his steed amain,
And rudely rush'd betwixt, and seiz'd the damsel's rein ;
Nor could her starting steed resist his sway ;
So back he turn'd, and dragg'd his prize away. 390

Hard were it sure, and bootless, to recite
What wrath, what fury, now inflam'd her knight !
Arm'd with a lance alone, a sword, and shield,
His foe in plate and mail completely steel'd,
What might he do ?—he sternly spurr'd his horse, 395
The ravisher he pass'd, and cross'd him in his course ;

‘ Vassal ! ’—aloud in threatening tone he cried,
‘ What deed of desperate baseness hast thou tried ?
‘ If aught of chivalry thy days have known,
‘ Disarm ! and face thy foe with weapons like his own ! 400
‘ Or bide thou here, on honour of a knight,
‘ Anon in equal arms I court the fight,
‘ Then be it seen, so then the field thou dare,
‘ If thou or Arthur’s blood may best deserve the fair.’

So spake Sir Gawaine, as in ire he burn’d, 405
And coldly thus the insulting foe return’d :

‘ By known disparity secur’d from harms,
‘ One, bare as thou art, rails at knights in arms :—
‘ Yet mark ; this woman, if I read aright,
‘ Is thine, thy paramour, and thou her knight : 410

‘ From strong constraint, I guess, proceeds thy claim ;
‘ Hence, seiz’d by me, my right becomes the same :—

‘ In fine, what boots it in despiteous mood
‘ That thou and I should waste each other’s blood ?
‘ Far wiser ’twere to stint this growing strife, 415
‘ And bide her doom, and spare the risk of life.

‘ Hence let us both retire a certain space,
‘ While the maid tarry in the middle place,
‘ Then, as to either her free steps are bent,
‘ His be the prize, and rest the foe content.’ 420

‘Content!’ Sir Gawaine cries with gladden’d voice,
Sure, as he ween’d him, of his lady’s choice,
Sure, not the proffer’d universe could move
Her loyal heart to hesitate in love;
‘Now, damsel, judge! and be our fates decreed!’ 425
He spoke; on either side the knights recede:
When—O the wondrous ways of womankind!
False as the seas! unstable as the wind!
With curious eye by turns she view’d the twain,
Compar’d them, balanc’d, view’d them o’er again, 430
And at the last, to mock prediction’s power,
Fix’d on the man she had not known an hour.

The prince was shent; and mortified desire,
And proud disdain, awak’d a moment’s ire;
But soon to aid his wonted wisdom came, 435
And self-commandment quench’d the gathering flame;
To the base pair no word he deign’d to say,
But calmly turn’d his steed, and hied him on his way.

Not far he journey’d ere the faithless fair
Miss’d the twain dogs, the nurslings of her care: 440
Chaf’d and impatient she enjoins her knight
To win these back, and vindicate her right.
‘By thee ’twas argued, knight,’ the prince replied,
‘When late my title to the dame was tried,

' That both should bide their object's just award, 445
 ' Bless'd, or bereav'd, as her free choice declar'd :
 ' So be it now ; let each the dogs invite ;
 ' And whom they follow, his shall be the right.'

Ill could the knight, while justice he profess'd,
 Refuse assent to such an equal test. 450
 Each gave the word ; but, deaf to sounds unknown,
 The faithful brutes regard the prince's voice alone.
 Him many a kind caress, and oft renew'd,
 As in the castle late the maid he woo'd,
 Endear'd at will : their grateful hearts record 455
 Fond favours past ; they fly to meet their lord.

' Friend,' quoth the prince, ' by sore experience bought
 ' I learn'd the lesson thou mayst soon be taught :
 ' Meantime receive it as a truth from me,
 ' That each day sees some woman's perfidy ; 460
 ' Each day beholds some faithful friend eschew'd,
 ' And kindness paid by black ingratitude :
 ' Learn too, it has not yet been seen or said
 ' That dogs desert the hand that gives them bread.'

The stranger answer'd nought, but back return'd : 465
 His mate with rage and disappointment burn'd :
 ' Restore my dogs ! my darling dogs restore !'
 Frantick she cried, ' or never see me more !'

Stung with the menace, short he turn'd his steed,
And fiercely spurr'd him on, and doom'd the prince to bleed.
The stout Sir Gawaine the quick trampling heard ; 471
And now, with lance in rest, the foe appear'd :
By strong defence constrain'd, he grasp'd his shield,
And fac'd the foul oppressor in the field :
Adroit to ward, and stedfast as a rock, 475
He caught, with targe oppos'd, the assailant shock ;
And in reply so stern a greeting gave,
Back from the sell to earth his lawless foe he drave.

Straight from his courser leaps the victor knight,
And bares his deadly blade to end the fight ; 480
The uplifted hauberk's skirt he draws aside,
In his foe's flank the avenging steel is dyed ;
Then loud he calls, his dogs the call obey,
And mounts his steed and calmly turns away.

Just then the faithless damsel reach'd the spot ; 485
She sees her champion die, and shudders at her lot.
On the cold earth, in agony of soul,
While down her cheeks the tears of terrour roll,
On the cold earth her dainty limbs she cast,
Then, clinging to the prince like one aghast, 490
'Forgive !' she cries, 'nor let the doleful night
'Here shut me in alone, and slay me with affright !'

‘ I leave but thee where I by thee was left,’
The prince replied, ‘ nor art thou here a weft :
‘ Where-e’er, methinks, those winning graces dwell, 495
‘ Friends may be found at liking :—fare thee well !’

He spoke, and pass’d ; and, ere dim twilight fail’d,
Imperial Carduel’s lofty towers he hail’d ;
There to the court his strange adventure told,
There listening scribes the wondrous tale enroll’d. 500



The Tale of False Lovers.



THE VALE OF FALSE LOVERS.

THE stout Sir Launcelot, as it once befell,
Pass'd the long year remote from Carduel;
Nor by his mistress once the knight was seen,
Fair Guenever, his mistress and his queen.

Far roam'd the warrior; captive knights he freed, 5
And dames he succour'd in their hour of need,
And many a lawless carle he did to die,
And evil customs quell'd with mastering remedy :
Yet oft he mus'd on Carduel and his fair,
For though his body stray'd, his heart was there ; 10
Still, as he rov'd, he felt his flame increas'd,
And the last hour of absence lov'd the best :
And now to swift return his steps were bent,
When, on a swelling hillock's green ascent,

At the slant entrance of a fertile vale, 15
He spied a weeping damsel, deadly pale ;
Her locks, dishevell'd all, she rent away,
And curs'd with piteous accent Mourgue the fay.
Nigh to the maid the gallant knight advanc'd,
And pray'd, with earnest kindness, what had chanc'd : 20
' Ah me ! my lord,' the doleful damsel cries,
' Ah bitter fruit of baleful jealousies !
' By these, imprudent to my endless cost,
' My friend, the bravest knight on earth, I lost.
' Strong in my bosom beat desire to try 25
' By sure assay my lover's constancy ;
' For this sad end I plied each female art,
' And moulded to my will his weetless heart ;
' By me seduc'd, the abhorred Mourgue's abode,
' Yon vale, the irremeable vale, he trod. 30
' There must he bide for aye ! and I remain
' All hopeless here, till death conclude my pain.
' Too well I sped his fickleness to prove !
' For, though I know him false, I die for love.'
She ended here ; and every word she spake 35
To marvel wrought Sir Launcelot du Lake :
Awhile he ween'd some strange delirious heat
Had thrust the powers of reason from their seat ;

And, ever and anon, with looks intent,
 He sought that fairy vale, the place of prisonment : 40
 A cool and cheerful vale in truth he saw,
 But nought there seem'd to thwart free nature's law :
 Throughout it ran a stream, like silver pure,
 And deck'd with trees of goodliest garniture ;
 High circling hills the peaceful plat surround, 45
 High circling hills with shadowy forests crown'd.
 Again he questions then the mourning maid,
 What hidden mystery this her tale convey'd ;
 And vows, if still he draw the vital air,
 Back to her arms her captive knight to bear. 50

' Of royal Arthur's sister, and her deeds,'
 Thus in her tale the weeping fair proceeds,
 ' And of her passing might in magick spell,
 ' Scarce needs it now the bruited fame to tell.
 ' This Mourgue, 'tis said, once lov'd a comely knight, 55
 ' And fed that treacherous passion to its height ;
 ' Him above all the world the fay prefers,
 ' And fondly weens his heart enthrall'd like hers.
 ' The knight, howe'er, with specious semblance feign'd,
 ' By dread of magick power alone constrain'd ; 60
 ' One young and boon was mistress of his soul,
 ' As beauteous as her rival Mourgue was foul.

‘ Soon as the fay this fatal secret learn’d,
‘ By turns her feverous bosom froze and burn’d ;
‘ Heart-struck she was, as if about to die, 65
‘ But strong revenge forbade, and rankling enmity :
‘ Bent was her wit to dog that loyal pair ;
‘ And, at the last, in yonder vale so fair
‘ She spied them both, unguarded as they prov’d
‘ With many a fond caress how well they lov’d. 70
‘ Forth from her covert then the monster burst,
‘ And dealt at large her calumnies accurs’d ;
‘ And, when her venom’d railing all was spent,
‘ She thus pronounc’d their grievous punishment :
“ Here both be stay’d !—so long as life shall last 75
“ By power of mighty magick rooted fast !’
‘ So spake the fay ; and now these lovers, each
‘ Some paces parted from the other’s reach,
‘ With looks of love, and eyes that never tire,
‘ Feed the full torment of unslak’d desire : 80
‘ Of motion void, denied the power to tell
‘ Their hearts’ sore anguish, here for aye they dwell.
‘ Nor this was all :—she thence devis’d a plan
‘ To wreak her sex’s wrongs on faithless man ;
‘ Around the vale, by incantations dread, 85
‘ A huge transparent wall of air she spread ;

- ' More firm than steel the liquid barrier's bound
 ' Girds in on every side the fatal ground ;
 ' No wight soe'er, whom conscious guilt shall read
 ' Disloyal to his dame in will or deed, 90
 ' May pass this precinct, journeying to the vale,
 ' But there must find his everlasting jail.
 ' A jail, in sooth ; yet otherwise, I wis,
 ' No worse a grievance than confinement is ;
 ' (The fay devising rather to impeach 95
 ' All future fault, than punish former breach ;)
 ' For there, it seems, the pensive prisoners find
 ' Whate'er may recreate or recure the mind ;
 ' Unshackled intercourse, delicious bowers,
 ' And dance and sports to fill the fleeting hours : 100
 ' Nay, should it e'er befall some loyal fair
 ' With a false paramour to enter there,
 ' To such the aerial walls no barrier prove,
 ' At will the guiltless maid may soothe or shun her love.
 ' Yet, maugre all, to be for aye confin'd 105
 ' So quells with languishment man's subject mind,
 ' That few are found of hardihood to bide ;
 ' The most have quickly pin'd away and died.
 ' And now eighteen long years have pass'd away
 ' Since first this scheme of wrath inspir'd the fay ; 110

' And travellers have nam'd the dreadful bourn
 ' THE VALE OF LOVERS FALSE, THE VALE WITHOUT RETURN.
 ' Still as the sun renews his bright career
 ' He sees some spouse or lover wandering here,
 ' And all this time, so faithless man is found, 115
 ' Not one, they say, has backward trac'd the ground.

— ' That shall they now, or e'er the day expire !'
 Exclaim'd abrupt the warrior, fill'd with fire,
 ' With this good arm'—— ' Ah Sir !' replied the fair,
 ' If life, if liberty be dear, forbear ! 120
 ' Vain is all prowess in this strange assay,
 ' Here loyalty alone will win thy way.'
 ' That too is mine,' rejoin'd the impatient knight,
 ' Though far beneath my sovereign lady's right;
 ' Yet, when a knight is resolute to try, 125
 ' And fears not dole, nor death's extremity,
 ' What nobler gifts, what mightier virtues, need
 ' To warrant just success upon his deed ?'

' There needs,' return'd the damsel once again,
 ' Faith to his mistress ; faith without a stain : 130
 ' Such faith, as, treasur'd in his soul's recess,
 ' Ne'er for a moment wish'd her influence less ;
 ' Such faith, as ne'er could image power to rove,
 ' And knows no fear, but fear to lose her love.'

- 'How?' quoth the knight, 'if some fond fair be grac'd 135
 'With one so true, so loyal, and so chaste?'
 'Ah!' cried the maid, 'if such a knight there be,
 'This deed will win him immortality!
 'Now may he burst this vale's impervious wall,
 'And free from hopeless bondage many a thrall; 140
 'Now may he boldly on, secure from harm,
 'And aye dissolve the abominable charm:
 'But, wo the while! there never yet was found
 'A man in whom love's grace did so abound,
 'A man who, pledg'd in youth's gay prime to one, 145
 'Priz'd her as life, and priz'd but her alone.
 'The crafty Mourgue read mortal frailty well,
 'When terms like these she chose to fence the spell.
 'Now, trust me, Sir, and let my words seem wise;
 'Preserve your gallant soul for happier enterprize: 150
 'No wise man yet has deem'd it honour's stain
 'To shun assay like this, where might is vain.
 'For me, the solace of this world is o'er!
 'To the sad vale I wend for evermore:
 'There will I seek out him I love so dear, 155
 'Ungrateful though he be, and insincere;
 'There will I find him, there will I abide,
 'And breathe my life's last accents by his side.'

‘ No, damsel, no !’ the gallant knight exclaim’d,
‘ Nor shalt thou die, nor manhood thus be sham’d ; 160
‘ Here stay thy steps ; anon I trust thou’lt find
‘ That loyalty yet dwells among mankind.’
The warrior spoke ; and, confident of right,
Spurr’d on his steed amain, and dar’d the fight.

Now had he reach’d the huge aerial bound 165
Stretch’d like a marish fog at eve around,
When, as he onward urg’d his snorting steed,
He saw the opacous volumes fast recede ;
Back roll’d the parted clouds on either side,
Nor dimm’d his course, nor entrance fair denied : 170
So on he pass’d ; but gathering thick behind,
As with the sweep of winter’s mightiest wind,
Full on his rear the forceful vapour lay,
And with imperious blast prescrib’d his way.
Before him skies that cheer’d, and earth that smil’d, 175
E’en to a charm his wondering sense beguil’d ;
Unnumber’d cells, in seemly rank dispos’d,
On right and left the lessening prospect clos’d ;
And in the midst, by cunning artists rear’d,
A chapel meet for deeds of prayer appear’d ; 180
A reverend pile ; which Mourgue’s regardful zeal
For her poor bondmen’s everlasting weal

Had kindly plann'd, that ere the sun's decline
Each day in solemn Mass the assembled band might join.

What foes the knight o'erthrew, what monsters dread 185
Pil'd the green plain with miscreated dead,
I sing not here ; nor yet what teen possess'd
The fairy's heart, to read her rival bless'd
With one whose fealty mock'd enchantment's charms,
Past peer alike in loyalty and arms. 190

Now proffer'd wealth she boasts ; now, chang'd, appears
All suppliant, all seductive in her tears :
He on his way still forward press'd outright,
Nor turn'd aside for danger or delight,
Till, slackening fast, each spell's mysterious force 195
Bent back to nature's law, and she resum'd her course :
Then rang the air for joy ; uprolling high
The foggy barrier fades into the sky ;
And a huge host rush on with wild acclaim,
Now freed from caytive bands, and hail their champion's name.
The damsel boon, Mourgue's luckless riva long, 201
And her brave loyal lover, lead the throng ;
Hard by their side comes he whose lady's plight
First to their aid had rous'd the conquering knight :
How chang'd their doom ! this blissful hour at last 205
Chas'd, at it seem'd, all thought of penance past.

Mourgue, singly sad, with looks deject and pale,
Stay'd nigh the confines of that fatal vale ;
And, as she view'd the victor knight depart,
Thus spoke aloud the presage of her heart :

210

' Hence, Launcelot, hence !—improvidently gay !
' Blind to the future, Launcelot ! go thy way !
' Soon shall thy soul repent thy luckless deed,
' And deep remorse to self-applause succeed :
' Soon many a love-lorn maid this land shall see,
' And read the spring of wretchedness in thee.'

215



The Lay of Sir Iambal.



THE LAY OF SIR LANVAL.

It was the time of Pentecost the bless'd
When royal Arthur held the accustom'd feast,
When Carduel's walls contain'd the vast resort
That press'd from every land to grace his plenar court.
There did the sovereign's copious hand dispense 5
Large boons to all with free magnificence,
To all but one; from Bretany he came,
A goodly knight, Sir Lanval was his name.
Long had the king, by partial temper sway'd,
His loyal zeal with cold neglect repaid; 10
Yet from a throne Sir Lanval drew his birth,
Nor could all England boast more comeliness and worth:
Whate'er the cause, no gift the monarch gave,
The knight with honest pride forbore to crave,

Till at the last, his substance all forespent, 15
From his lord's court the hopeless liegeman went.

No leave he took, he told no mortal wight,
Scarce had he thought to guide his steps aright,
But all at random, reckless of his way,
He wander'd on the better half of day. 20
Ere evening fell he reach'd a pleasant mead,
And there he loos'd his beast, at will to rest or feed;
Then by a brook-side down his limbs he cast,
And, pondering on the waters as they pass'd,
The while his cloak his bended arm sustain'd, 25
Sadly he sat, and much in thought complain'd.

So mus'd he long, till by the frequent tread
Of quickening feet constrain'd he turn'd his head:
Close by his side there stood a female pair,
Both richly clad, and both enchanting fair; 30
With courteous guise the wondering knight they greet,
With winning speech, with invitation sweet
From their kind mistress, where at ease she lay,
And in her tent beguil'd the lingering day.
Awhile Sir Lanval reft of sense appear'd; 35
Then up at once his mailed limbs he rear'd,
And, with his guides impatient to proceed,
Though a true knight, for once forgot his steed.

And now, with costliest silk superbly dight,
 A gay pavilion greets the warrior's sight ; 40
 Its taper spire a cowering eagle crown'd,
 In substance gold, of workmanship renown'd.
 Within, recumbent on a couch, was laid
 A form more perfect than e'er man survey'd :
 The new-blown rose, the lily's virgin prime, 45
 In the fresh hour of fragrant summer-time,
 Though of all flowers the fairest of the fair,
 With this sweet paragon might ill compare ;
 And o'er her shoulders flow'd with graceful pride,
 Though for the heat some little cast aside, 50
 A crimson pall of Alexandria's dye,
 With snowy ermine lin'd, befitting royalty ;
 Yet was her skin, where chance bewray'd the sight,
 Far purer than the snowy ermine's white.
 ' Lanval ! ' she cried, as in amazed mood 55
 Of speech and motion void the warrior stood,
 ' Lanval ! ' she cried, ' 'tis you I seek for here ;
 ' Your worth has won me :—knight, I love thee dear ;
 ' And of my love such proof will soon impart,
 ' Shall wring with envy thy proud sovereign's heart : 60
 ' Then slighted merit shall be fully known,
 ' And kings repine at wealth beyond their own.'

Words such as these arous'd the astonied knight,
He felt love's kindling flame inspire his spright,
And 'O pure paragon!' he straight replied, 65
'Thy love is all! I hold no wish beside!
'If bliss so rare thy favouring lips decree,
'No deed shall foil thy champion's chivalry;
'No toil shall wear, no danger shall dismay,
'Let my queen will, and Lanval must obey: 70
'So may I thrive as, from this moment bless'd,
'One hope I cherish, one sole boon request,
'Thy winning form, thy fostering smiles to see,
'And never never more to part from thee.'

So speaking ceas'd awhile the enraptur'd knight, 75
For now the two fair damsels met his sight;
Each on her arm resplendent vestments brought,
Fresh from the loom, magnificently wrought:
Enrob'd in these with added grace he mov'd,
As one by nature form'd to be belov'd; 80
And, by the fairy to the banquet led,
And plac'd beside her on one genial bed,
Whiles the twain handmaids every want supplied,
Cates were his fare to mortal man denied:
Yet was there one, the foremost of the feast, 85
One food there was far sweeter than the rest,

One food that most did feed the warrior's flame,
For from his lady's lovely lips it came.

What feeble wit of man might here suffice
To paint with colours dim Sir Lanval's ecstasies! 90

There lapt in bliss he lies, there fain would stay,
There dream the remnant of his life away :

But o'er their loves her dew still evening shed,
Night gather'd on amain, and thus the fairy said :
' Rise, knight ! I may not longer keep thee here ; 95

' Back to the court return, and nothing fear :

' There, in all princely cost profusely free,

' Maintain the honour of thyself and me ;

' There feed thy lavish fancies uncontroll'd,

' And trust the exhaustless power of fairy gold, 100

' But should reflection thy soft bosom move,

' And wake sad wishes for thine absent love ;

' (And sure such wishes thou canst never frame

' In any place where presence would be shame,)

' Whene'er thou call, thy joyful eyes shall see 105

' This form, invisible to all but thee.

' One thing I warn thee ; let the blessing rest

' An unrevealed treasure in thy breast ;

' If here thou fail, that hour may favours end,

' Nor wilt thou ever more behold thy friend :— 110

Here, with a parting kiss, broke off the fay,
' Farewell !' she cried, and sudden pass'd away.
The knight look'd up, and prest without the tent
Beheld his faithful steed, and forth he went :
Light on his back he leap'd with graceful mien, 115
And to the towers of Carduel turn'd the rein ;
Yet ever and anon he look'd behind
With strange amaz'd uncertainty of mind,
As one who hop'd some further proof to spy
If all were airy dream or just reality. 120

And now great Arthur's court beheld the knight
In sumptuous guise magnificently dight ;
Large were his presents, cost was nothing spar'd,
And every former friend his bounty shar'd.
Now ransom'd thralls, now worthy knights supplied 125
With equipage their scanty means denied,
Now minstrels clad, their patron's deeds proclaim,
And add just honour to Sir Lanval's name.
Nor did his kindness yield a sparing meed
To the poor pilgrim in his lowly weed ; 130
Nor less to those who erst in fight renown'd
Had borne the bloody cross and warr'd on Paynim ground :
Yet, as his best-belov'd so lately told,
His unexhausted purse o'erflow'd with gold.

But what far dearer solace did impart, 135
 And thrill'd with thankfulness his loyal heart,
 Was the choice privilege, that, night or day,
 Whene'er his whisper'd prayer invok'd the fay,
 That loveliest form, surpassing mortal charms,
 Bless'd his fond eyes, and fill'd his circling arms. 140

Now shall ye hear how these delights so pure
 Chang'd all to trouble and discomfiture.

'Twas on the solemn feast of sainted John,
 When knights past tale did in the castle won,
 That, supper done, 'twas will'd they all should fare 145
 Forth to the orchard green, awhile to ramble there.
 The queen, who long had mark'd with mute delight
 The gallant graces of the Breton knight,
 Soon from the window of her lofty tower
 Mid the gay band espied him in a bower, 150
 And turning to her dames with blithe intent,
 'Hence all!' she cried; 'we join the merriment!'
 All took the word, to the gay band they hied,
 The queen besure was close to Lanval's side,
 Sprightly she seem'd, and sportfully did toy, 155
 And caught his hand to dance, and led the general joy.

Lanval alone was dull where all were gay,
 His thoughts were fixed on his lovely fay :

Soon as he deftly might he fled the throng;
 And her dear name nigh trembled on his tongue, 160
 When the fond queen, who well had trac'd his flight,
 Stepp'd forth, and cross'd his disappointed sight.
 Much had she sought to meet the knight alone;
 Now in these words she made her passion known.

'Lanval!' she said, 'thy worth, long season past, 165
 'In my deserv'd esteem hath fix'd thee fast:
 'Tis thine this prosperous presage to improve:—
 'Say, gentle knight, canst thou return my love?'

The knight, ye wot, love's paragon ador'd;
 And, had his heart been free, rever'd his word: 170
 True to his king, the fealty of his soul
 Abhorr'd all commerce with a thought so foul.

In fine, the sequel of my tale to tell,
 From the shent queen such bitter slander fell,
 That, with an honest indignation stung, 175
 The fatal secret 'scap'd Sir Lanval's tongue:

'Yes!' he declar'd, 'he felt love's fullest power!
 'Yes!' he declar'd, 'he had a paramour!
 'But one, so perfect in all female grace,
 'Those charms might scarcely win her handmaid's place;
 'Those charms, were now one menial damsel near, 181
 'Would lose their little light, and disappear.'

Strong degradation sure the words implied ;
The queen stood mute, she could not speak for pride ;
But quick she turn'd, and to her chamber sped, 185
There prostrate lay and wept upon her bed ;
There vow'd the coming of her lord to wait,
Nor move till promis'd vengeance seal'd her hate.

The king, that day devoted to the chase,
Ne'er till the close of evening sought the place ; 190
Then at his feet the fair deceiver fell,
And gloss'd her artful tale of mischief well ;
Told how a satyry knight his queen abus'd
With prayer of proffer'd love, with scorn refus'd :
Thereat how rudely rail'd the ruffian shent, 195
With slanderous speech and foul disparagement,
And boastfully declar'd such charms array'd
The veriest menial where his vows were paid,
That, might one handmaid of that dame be seen,
All eyes would shun with scorn imperial Arthur's queen.

The weeping tale of her his heart ador'd 201
Wak'd the quick wrath of her deluded lord ;
Sternly he menac'd some disastrous end
By fire or cord should soon that wretch attend,
And straight dispatch'd three barons bold to bring 205
The culprit to the presence of his king.

Lanval the while, the queen no longer near,
Home to his chamber hied with heavy cheer :
Much did he dread that luckless boast might prove
The eternal forfeit of his lady's love ; 210
And, all impatient the dark doom to try,
And end the pangs of dire uncertainty,
His humble prayer he tremblingly preferr'd .
Wo worth the while ! his prayer no more was heard.
O ! how he wail'd ! how curs'd the unhappy day ! 215
Deaf still remain'd the unrelenting fay.
Him, thus dismay'd, the approaching barons found ;
Outstretch'd he lay, and weeping, on the ground ;
To reckless ears their summons they declar'd,
Lost was his fay, for nought beside he car'd, 220
So forth they led him, void of will or word,
Dead was his heart within, his wretched life abhorr'd.

They reach the presence ; there he hears surpris'd
The mortal charge of felony devis'd :
Stern did the monarch look and sharp upbraid 225
For foul seducement on his queen assay'd :
The knight, whose loyal heart disdain'd the offence,
With generous warmth affirm'd his innocence ;
He ne'er devis'd seduction :—for the rest,
His speech discourteous frankly he confess'd ; 230

Inflam'd with ire his lips forewent their guard;—
He stood prepar'd to bide the court's award.

Straight from his peers were chosen judges nam'd :
These fix the trial, with due forms proclaim'd :

By these 'tis order'd that the accus'd assign 235
True men for pledge, or in a prison pine.

Lanval, 'tis told, had pass'd from foreign strand,
And kinsmen none there dwelt on English land ;
And well he knew that in the hour of proof
Friends for the most part fail, and stand aloof : 240

Sue them he would not, but with manly pride
In silence turn'd, and toward his prison hied.
With generous grief the deed Sir Gawaine view'd,
Dear to the king was he, and nephew of his blood,
But liberal worth past nature's tie prevail'd, 245

And sympathy stood forth, if friendship fail'd.
Nor less good-will full many a knight inspir'd ;
With general voice the prisoner all requir'd,
All pledg'd their fiefs he should not fail the day,
And homeward bore him from the court away. 250

His friends, for sure they well that title claim,
First thought the licence of his tongue to blame ;
But, when they mark'd how deeply he was mov'd,
They sooth'd and cherish'd rather than reprov'd.

Each day, as sunk he sat in desperate grief, 255
They spoke kind words of comfort and relief;
Each day, howe'er they sought, howe'er they sued,
Scarce might they win his lips to taste of food :
' Come, welcome death !' for ever was his cry ;
' Lo here a wretch who wishes but to die !' 260
So still he wail'd, till wo such mastery wan
They trembled for his nobler powers of man ;
They fear'd lest reason's tottering rule should end,
And to a moping idiot sink their friend.

At length came on the day long since decreed 265
When the sad knight should suffer or be freed.
From every part the assembling barons meet :
Each judge, as foreordain'd, assumes his seat :
The king, too strongly sway'd by female pride,
O'er the grave council wills himself preside, 270
And, while the presence of his queen inspires,
Goads on the judgment as her wrath requires.
There might be seen that honourable band
Late for the prisoner pledg'd in fief and land ;
Slow they advance, then stand before the board, 275
Whiles all behold the entrusted thrall restor'd.
With many a question next the accus'd was prov'd ;
Then, while the votes were given, awhile remov'd.

But those brave warriours, when they weigh'd the plight
 And the fair promise of this hapless knight, 280
 His youth, for yet he reach'd not manhood's prime,
 His gallant mien, his life without a crime,
 His helpless state, by kindred unsustain'd,
 In a strange court and in a foreign land,
 All cried aloud, were Lanval doom'd to die 285
 It were a doom of shame and cruelty.

At first 'twas mov'd that straight conducted thence
 Some meet confinement should chastise the offence ;
 When one grave peer, in honest hope to wave
 The dire debasement of a youth so brave, 290
 Produc'd this purpose, with such reasoning grac'd,
 'Twas with the general plaudit soon embrac'd :
 ' 'Twas urg'd,' he said, ' and sure the offence he blam'd,
 ' Their queen by base comparison was sham'd ;
 ' That he, the prisoner, with strange fury mov'd, 295
 ' Had prais'd too proudly the fair dame he lov'd :
 ' First then 'twere meet this mistress should be seen
 ' There in full court, and plac'd beside the queen ;
 ' So might they judge if passion's mad pretence
 ' Or truth had wrought the ungrateful preference.' 300

So spake the judge ; Sir Lanval hears the doom,
 And weens his hour of destiny is come :

Quench'd is the love that erst, in happier day,
 Won to his whisper'd prayer the willing fay ;
 And the last licence pitying laws devise, 305
 Serves but to close the count of miseries.

When lo ! strange shouts of joy and clamorous cheers
 Rose from without, and stay'd the astonish'd peers :
 At hand two damsels entering in were seen,
 Lovely alike their look, and noble was their mien ; 310
 On a gray dappled steed each lady rode,
 That pac'd for pride, as conscious of its load :
 ' Lo here ! ' 'twas murmur'd round with new delight,
 ' Lo here the mistress of the Breton knight !'
 The twain meanwhile pass'd onward undelay'd, 315
 And to the king their graceful greetings paid,
 Then told their lady's coming, and desir'd
 Such harbourage as highest rank requir'd.

E'en as they spoke, twain others, lovelier fair,
 Of stature loftier, of more royal air, 320
 Came proudly on: of gold their purpled vest,
 Well-shap'd, each symmetry of limb confess'd :
 On goodly mules from farthest Spain ybrought,
 This pair the presence of the sovereign sought.

The impatient king, ere well their lips had power 325
 To claim fit harbourage of board and bower,

Led on their way ; and, court'sies scanty done,
Back to the peers he sped, and press'd the judgment on ;
For much, meseems, his vengeful heart misgave
Some thwarting chance the Breton knight might save. 330

Just were his boding fears : new shouts ascend
Of loud acclaim, and wide the welkin rend.
A female form the wondering peers behold,
Too bright for mixture of earth's mortal mould :
The gridelin pall that down her shoulders flow'd 335
Half vail'd her snow-white courser as she rode ;
On her fair hand a sparrow-hawk was plac'd,
Her steed's sure steps a following greyhound trac'd ;
And, as she pass'd, still pressing to the sight
Female and male and citizen and knight, 340
What wight soe'er in Carduel's walls was found,
Swell'd the full quire and spread the joy around.

Lanval, the while, apart from all the rest,
Sat sadly waiting for his doom unblest'd :
(Not that he fear'd to die ; death rather sued ; 345
For life was nought, despoil'd of all its good :)
To his dull ears his hastening friends proclaim
The fancied form and presence of his dame ;
Feebly he rais'd his head ; and, at the sight,
In a strange ecstasy of wild delight, 350

‘ ’Tis she ! ’tis she ! ’ was all his faltering cry,
 ‘ I see her once again, now satisfied I die ! ’

Thus while he spake, the peers with seemly state,
 Led by their king, the illustrious stranger wait ;
 Proud Carduel’s palace hail’d its princely guest, 355
 And thus the dame the assembled court address’d.

‘ List, King, and Barons !—Arthur, I have lov’d
 ‘ A knight, most loyal in thy service prov’d ;
 ‘ Him, by thy foul neglect, reduc’d to need,
 ‘ These hands did recompense ; they did thy deed. 360
 ‘ He disobey’d me ; I forebore to save ;
 ‘ I left him at the portal of the grave :
 ‘ Firm loyalty hath well that breach repair’d,
 ‘ He loves me still, nor shall he lack reward.

‘ Barons ! your court its judgment did decree, 365
 ‘ Quittance or death, your queen compar’d with me :
 ‘ Behold the mistress of the knight is come,
 ‘ Now judge betwixt us, and pronounce the doom.’—

All cry aloud the words of love were right,
 And one united voice acquits the knight. 370
 Back from the palace turns the parting fay,
 And with her beauteous damsels speeds away :
 Her, as she pass’d, the enraptur’d Lanval view’d ;
 High on the portal’s marble steps he stood ;

On her tall steed he sprang with vigorous bound ; 375
Thenceforth their footsteps never wight has found.

But 'tis the Breton tale they both are gone
To the fair isle of fertile Avalon ;
There, in the lap of love for ever laid,
Embay'd in bliss, by sorrow unassay'd, 380
They make their won :—for me, where-e'er they dwell,
No farther tale befalls me here to tell.



The Lay of Sir Gruelán.



THE LAY OF SIR GRUÉLAN.

WHAT strange adventure once Gruélan knew,
E'en what I learn'd, I now relate to you :
Well may the tune in each man's memory dwell,
And the choice lay deserves an audience well.

A Breton born, and of illustrious race,
And passing praise for worthiness and grace,—
Such was Gruélan : fair his form, and join'd
With upright singleness of word and mind.

5

When bordering princes brav'd his sovereign's power,
And Bretany assay'd war's fearful hour,
First to his banner rush'd the dauntless knight ;
First still was found in tourney or in fight :
Such were his deeds, so glorious was their end,
That his king lov'd and priz'd him as a friend.

10

N

High worth he had ; and wide was nois'd his fame, 15
 Till to his sovereign's spouse the rumour came ;
 And, as the tale was day by day rehears'd,
 And the last tidings still surpass'd the first,
 In her warm thought so strong did fancy move,
 That admiration ripen'd into love. 20

So, in the end, resolv'd to ease her heart,
 One day she call'd her chamberlain apart,
 And ' Who ? ' quoth she, ' is this much-vaunted youth ?
 ' This brave Gruélan—mark thou tell the truth :
 ' Doth universal fame report him right ? 25
 ' For all men praise him :—Dost thou know the knight ?'
 ' Great mistress mine ! ' the chamberlain replied,
 ' The knight I know, and know his courage tried ;
 ' And, for his guise, ' tis of such courteous ease,
 ' He's lov'd alike by men of all degrees.' 30
 ' 'Tis now long time,' the shameless queen rejoin'd,
 ' His praise hath wrought within my secret mind ;
 ' And in his cause my heart doth plead so strong,
 ' Thou must devise our interview ere long.'

The chamberlain his meet obeisance made ; 35
 ' Such news, besure, must elevate ; ' he said ;
 ' Such flattering sounds, besure, must glad his heart ;—
 And, as he spoke, he turn'd him to depart :

Straight to Gruélan's lodge his course he bent,
And bade him to the queen, but vail'd the intent ; 40
So to the castle's gate attendant hied
The weetless knight, the chamberlain his guide.

Now to the presence of his queen the guest
With such full forms as chamberlains know best
Was duly led : enraptur'd of his charms, 45
She clipp'd the lusty warrior in her arms ;
Press'd on his ruddy lips her warm embrace,
And gaz'd o'er every feature of his face :
Then, on a carpet plac'd herself beside,
Each wile the fair seducing female tried ; 50
Bent was her will the knight's dull sense to move ;
Her voice seem'd friendship, but her looks were love.

Hard were it sure, I ween, for mortal wight
To see such signs, nor read their cause aright :
Yet was the crafty queen but ill appay'd, 55
With such grave reverence each reply was made :
Nor would she first declare love's mastering flame ;
Pride, yet alive, forbade, and struggling shame :
Yet looks, she found, might little boot her here,
Plain speech at last must make love's secret clear : 60
Unrein'd desire prevail'd :—' Fair sir ! ' she cried,
' Hath ne'er thine heart fond female friendship tried ?

- ' Such peerless charms must sure some dame inspire ?
 ' And conquering love be thine, and uncontroll'd desire ?'
 ' Liege lady mine ! ' (Gruélan thus return'd,) 65
 ' With love's bright fires this bosom ne'er hath burn'd.
 ' Love's sovereign lore, mysterious and refin'd,
 ' Is the pure confluence of immortal mind ;
 ' Chaste union of two hearts by virtue wrought,
 ' Where each seems either in word deed and thought ; 70
 ' Each singly to itself no more remains,
 ' But one will guides, one common soul sustains.
 ' Vain hope for me such boundless bliss to share,
 ' Young yet in years, and unconfirm'd in war :
 ' Some day, perchance, my deeds should glory crown, 75
 ' These joys may yet be mine, the guerdon of renown.'

Blithe was the queen, while thus the knight defin'd
 Love's wondrous influence o'er man's subject mind ;
 Well to her wish each doctrine hope explain'd :
 She ween'd Gruélan's heart already gain'd : 80
 Reserve cast off, she now at large declar'd
 Light was her sovereign in her love's regard ;
 Her vacant heart still sought some kindred breast,
 Some sympathetick seat of blissful rest,
 Some friend, some knight for gallant worth renown'd ;— 85
 Sure that accomplish'd knight at last was found !

Sure, courtesy, sure gallant worth was there,
Too great to cause a love-sick queen's despair !

The knight, confus'd, as one too closely press'd ;
Deep sense of grace, all undeserv'd, profess'd : 90
Yet did his plighted faith renounce the thought ;
Faith from his soldier with just stipend bought
A king might claim ; to this, free bounty join'd,
Large as his generous lord's expansive mind,
Cried shame upon the deed ; a deed imbued 95
With the foul blot of false ingratitude.

So spake the knight ; so speaking, left the room :
The astonied queen remain'd with anguish dumb :
Sharp turns of passion shook her trembling frame,
But most quick grief prevail'd, and disappointed shame. 100

Yet, when the tempest of distress was pass'd,
Such fatal flattery sooth'd her hopes unchaste,
Still did she ween assiduous court might move,
And win wish'd recompence, and waken love,
Kind gifts she sent, kind interviews she plann'd, 105
Kind billets, written with her royal hand ;
But all were vain : Gruélan's loyal mind
With stedfast modesty each lure declin'd ;
Till, in the end, when now she well descried
All prayer was bootless, and all hope denied, 110

As one quite spent, she left the thriftless chase,
And enmity assum'd love's vacant place :
Her royal spouse she dup'd with dexterous sleight,
And sour'd his soul against the injur'd knight ;
Cashier'd of pay, fiducial favours lost, 115
The knight now serves with unrequited cost ;
Scant were his means to feed such waste of gold,
His arms, his chattels, piece by piece were sold ;
Drain'd by degrees of this his last supply,
Nought now remain'd but grim despondency. 120
Which way, alas ! might poor Gruélan turn ?
What now devise, thus outcast and forlorn ?
Scarce might ye marvel, scarce deny belief,
Should my sad lay record he died of grief.

One day it chanc'd that to his lodge he went, 125
There pensive sat and sole, and gave his sorrows vent ;
His hosts, no matter where, from home were gone,
And their young daughter kept their house alone ;
A winning form she had, and manners mild ;
The sooth to say, she was a lovely child : 130
Sweet pity fill'd this little peasant's breast
To hear the sorrows of her sobbing guest :
Upstairs she stole, she gently op'd the door,
And, as she strove to cheer him, wept full sore ;

Then, while she warmly press'd his languid hand 135
With simpleness that man might not withstand,
Thence with herself she pray'd the knight to go,
And share her homely noon-tide meal below.
The knight, whose soul, by sickening wo subdued,
Ill might abide the loathsome thought of food, 140
Smil'd on the eager maid, and thank'd her kind;
'Hunger,' he said, 'dwelt not with wounded mind:'
Then, as a wretch abandon'd to despair,
With quick resolve to pine no longer there,
His squire he calls, and gives commandment strait 145
Nigh, with his saddled steed, at hand to wait:
Bent was his will to shun that thankless ground,
To flee that thankless court, and never more be found.
Alas! no sell remain'd to dight the steed;
His own was barter'd long time past for need; 150
And, but for kindness of the darling maid,
There must the miserable knight have stay'd:
She, goodly child, retiring, sped like thought
Till in her arms her father's gear she brought;
Uncouth, I ween, such gear to gentle knight; 155
With this, howbe, his stately steed was dight,
And forth he far'd; while, as he pass'd along,
Close on his footsteps press'd the village throng:

From every lane pour'd in that rabble rout,
With scornful laughter loud, and boisterous shout; 160
Such is the course with folk of base degrees;
Ye ne'er shall win much courtesy from these.

The knight, susceptible of grief alone,
Mark'd not the press, but slowly journey'd on :
In ken a vast umbrageous forest lay, 165
So there he enter'd in, and urg'd his wandering way;
Down on his breast did hang his drooping head,
For wo-begone he was, his heart and hopes were dead.

When lo, all unawares, a spotless hind,
More white than snow, the comeliest of her kind, 170
Sprang up beneath his feet; then fled before;
Yet seem'd to pace with pain, as wounded sore.
Her timorous semblance and her limping flight
Rous'd from his mournful muse the errant knight;
Grief to a hunter's ardour now gave place, 175
Fair was the game, and easy seem'd the chase :
She still with faltering steps appear'd to toil,
Just far enough before to feed the hopes of spoil,
Till, many a fruitless turn and circuit past,
Into a flowery mead they came at last; 180
And there she stopp'd; and there awhile she stood
By the green margent of a crystal flood :

Within that flood did bathe a dame so bright,
So prime of youth, of skin so dainty white,
That my poor wit, too feeble all, doth fail
185
With her sweet image to adorn my tale.

Rich was her raiment, all her robe was gold ;
A neighbouring tree the costly charge did hold ;
And, seated on the bank, two damsels sheen,
The ready handmaids of her will were seen. 190

Scarce might the twain descry the stranger knight,
But up they sprang, and fled amain for fright :
He, all regardless of the maids' alarms,
Lost in the lustre of their sovereign's charms,
So lost that, as his eyes that vision caught, 195
His hind, his hunting, and his woes, were nought ;
Leap'd from his steed ; and hastening to his prey,
Snatch'd the rich treasure of the tree away.

Well may ye guess the youth no theft design'd ;
The dame's dear jeopardy inspir'd his mind : 200
Yet, when he heard the insulted fair exclaim
How such base deeds to courteous knights were shame,
His heart was mov'd ; he yielded to her prayer ;
To the green bank he sped, and left the garments there :
Then, decently withdrawn, apart he stay'd, 205
While the fair lady of the stream array'd.

Now shone the dame with comeliest splendour dress'd ;
And to the stream return'd the impatient guest :
Her by the hand he caught, and onward led
Where the thick trees their shadowy coolness shed ; 210
And many entreaties tried the enamour'd knight,
And many a tender tale of love's delight :
So might he speed, as offering there he made
Of a pure heart, now first by love assay'd :
So might he speed, as from that moment bound 215
To live her own true knight, for loyalty renown'd.
Awhile, thus sway'd it seem'd by female pride,
All suit, all dalliance, well the dame denied ;
Then own'd her fairy power ; herself declar'd
(By love's sweet witchery erewhile ensnar'd) 220
Had sent the lingering hind, the waters wrought,
And lur'd the paramour her heart had sought.

Lo, westward roll'd, the sun with slanting gleam
Streak'd the green mead, and stain'd the glassy stream :
Then the fond fairy bade the knight depart, 225
Nor fear lest absence change her constant heart :
Still, vail'd by secret law from human eyes,
Clear to his sight alone, her form should rise,
Still loyal, kind ; while stedfast wisdom held
His conscious lips inviolably seal'd. 230

She spoke; the circling waves receiv'd the fair;
Sole was the wondering warrior on the laire.

Now, back return'd, and lost in museful mood,
Gruélan leaning at his casement stood;

And, as in hope to lengthen past delight, 235
Full on the conscious forest fix'd his sight.

Not long he gaz'd ere issuing thence was seen

A gentle youth advancing o'er the green,

And by the rein he led a sumptuous steed,

And well the trappings with the beast agreed; 240

From the dear fairy friend a gift it came,

A palfrey brave, and Gedefer its name:

A squire the stripling was, well taught to yield

All service to a knight in court or field;

A male he bore with costliest garments stor'd, 245

These forth he drew, and tender'd to his lord:

Next, the long list of charges undefray'd,

The costs of desperate need, he gently pray'd;

'To him,' he told, 'was given injunction strait

'With boundless dole to quit the inglorious weight, 250

'And from that hour, where-e'er the knight should wend,

'His footsteps, treasurer and squire, to tend.'

So spake the youth; with joy Gruélan heard;

Then on his hosts a liberal boon conferr'd:

This gratitude ordain'd his first expence, 255
And gladden'd him in power of recompence.
Nor did he less regard, nor less repay,
All kindness shown in want's disastrous day;
While needy knights, Trouveurs the sires of verse,
And thralls, his large beneficence rehearse. 260
Erst was the knight belov'd; but, lov'd before,
Now judge that love was heighten'd more and more.
So all things smil'd: each eve, his prayer preferr'd,
E'en as he spake his beauteous dame appear'd:
Swift fled the time; a year soon roll'd away 265
In wishes all fulfill'd, and bliss without allay:
Till joy found peril in its own excess,
And misery sprang from fearless happiness.
'Twas Pentecost; and now, proclaim'd to all,
The king kept open court in bower and hall: 270
All knights, all barons of his land, repair'd
To the full feast, where nought of cost was spar'd;
Fair invitation to each wight was sent,
And thither, with the rest, Gruélan went.
In times like this when full carousal reign'd, 275
One custom passing strange the king maintain'd;
Proud of his spouse, whose beauty uncompar'd
Shone through the realm, he still that pride declar'd;

Still 'twas his course when now the rich repast
 Drew toward its end, the richest as the last, 280
 When the blithe heart forgot decorum's bound,
 And the wit sparkled as the wine went round,
 To the full hall to lead the royal dame ;
 There, plac'd on high, she sat, a candidate for fame ;
 There from her proud alcove o'erlook'd the feast, 285
 While thus the uxorious prince his peers address'd.
 ' Say lords, say knights, have e'er your wanderings known
 ' A queen whose sovereign charms might match your own ?'
 Such was the custom : hence, as wont, was seen
 On this feast's final day the imperious queen : 290
 Straight through the hall loud shouts of praise resound ;
 ' Lo here the loveliest queen ! the loveliest fair on ground !'
 So cried the rest ; Gruélan mute the while
 Held down his head to vail his secret smile ;
 For his fond fay was present to his mind, 295
 With looks that left all earthly charms behind.
 The scornful mirth that sparkled in his eye
 Scap'd not the queen's regardful jealousy ;
 ' Lo there !' she cried, as to her spouse she turn'd,
 ' A sight for kings to gaze on unconcern'd ; 300
 ' Lo there alloy for such an hour as this,
 ' When all congratulate their sovereign's bliss ;

- ' One man's untemper'd insult unprov'd,
- ' One man, and he the man thyself hast lov'd.
- ' Err'd I, or nay? that long time past have plain'd 305
- ' Of thanklessness and licence unrestrain'd.'

The indignant monarch caught his consort's fire;
 The knight he call'd, his visage glow'd with ire,
 And on his fealty bade reveal what mirth
 Had given that scornful smile of silence birth. 310

- With mild respect the modest knight return'd,
- ' That long his eyes their sovereign's charms had learn'd;
- ' He saw, as all beside must sure have seen,
- ' What grace, what loveliness adorn'd his queen;
- ' Yet did he ween, within the world's wide bound 315
- ' Some dame more passing fair might still be found.'
- ' What? did he know the dame?' the king replied:
- The knight rejoin'd, ' Truth might not be denied;
- ' A dame he knew, how strange soe'er the thing,
- ' Whose charms pass'd thirty fold the consort of his king.'

At these last words the queen wax furious quite, 321
 And call'd down doom upon the luckless knight:

- ' O! let my royal spouse,' she cried, ' decree
- ' This paragon be brought and pair'd with me!
- ' Here should his deeds belie his proud pretence, 325
- ' Wo be his meed! the meed of insolence.'

Sharp was her speech ; the festive hall was mute ;
The monarch sternly ratified her suit :
Due forms of trial done, Gruélan's fate
Rests in the bosom of his fairy mate. 330

Awhile unmov'd she hears his piercing cries ;
Then gives her wondrous charms to mortal eyes :
On the full court the thrilling beauties fall,
And claim just doom, and free the acquitted thrall :
Yet pity none she show'd ; but turn'd in haste, 335
Nor deign'd one glance of pardon as she pass'd.

Ah ! bootless boon of life's unthankful load !
Ah ! gift in scornful cruelty bestow'd !
As by his strange distress to frenzy wrought
His peerless steed the abandon'd lover sought ; 340
Swift o'er the land, where-e'er his mistress leads,
With prayers, and tears, and piteous cries he speeds,
And presses hard behind, still fancying, still
To bend her hard inexorable will,

Till now, far left the city, o'er the plain 345
The forest's verge the fay was seen to gain ;
And straight both shroud them in the darksome wood,
Course the green mead, and ken the enchanted flood :
There stopp'd the fairy, thither sped the knight ;
Then in the wave she sank, and vanish'd from his sight.

Love-lost Gruélan, resolute to die, 351
Since hope was none of happier destiny,
Plung'd headlong dauntless down : lo ! back to shore
The struggling knight the reffluent waters bore ;
And ' Cease vain quest ! ' a voice was heard to say, 355
' Thine eyes can never more behold thy fay.'
He, reckless all, again sprang forward straight :
High dash'd the surging stream beneath his weight ;
Round roll his limbs by circling eddies thrown,
Then senseless float the buoyant current down. 360

Such penitence sincere, such passing truth,
Mov'd the fay's menial pair to kindly ruth :
Their royal lady both fair damsels sued,
And soon to softness chang'd her haughty mood :
Her knight she now with snowy arm sustains, 365
And wakes the stagnant life-blood in his veins :
Awhile he rests upon the flowery strand,
Then both together part for fairy-land.

Rife goes the Breton tale Gruélan's lot
Is with the fairy still, where death is not. 370
But for the palfrey Gedefer, who stood
Reft of his lord beside that wondrous flood,
As with his loss distraught the peerless steed
Spurn'd the green sward, and madly scour'd the mead ;

Shrill doleful neighings night and day were heard, 375

And still amain he fled when man appear'd.

So pass'd his life : e'en now, tradition shews,

Oft as the circling year that day renews,

By the stream side is seen the steed forlorn,

And for his fruitless search is heard to mourn. 380

Soon through the land the dittied story spread

Of the good knight and of his faithful steed :

And some choice mind, in rhyme's propitious day,

From the rude strain wrought out GRUE'LAN's LAY,



NOTES.

NOTES TO AUCASSIN AND NICOLETTE.

It may not be amiss to preface the following Notes by observing, that most of the head and tail-pieces throughout the volume are intended to be something more than mere ornaments, being composed with attention to the costume of the 12th and 13th centuries. They were executed, chiefly after the translator's sketches, by Messrs. Thomas and John Bewick of Newcastle upon Tyne; the younger of whom died while these pages were preparing for the press.

The compositions of the Trouveurs now extant, whether *Lays* or *Fabliaux*, are so universally metrical, that M. Le Grand remarks the present tale is probably the only known exception to this rule, being a mixture of prose and verse. The prose, which forms the body of the narration, was intended to be declaimed, and the pieces of poetry with which it was interspersed, seem to have answered the purpose of the airs in our operas. In the original accordingly the copyist has inserted 'this part is to be sung,' 'this part is to be declaimed.' In one manuscript the airs are noted; and M. Le Grand remarks, that this is the only example he has been able to discover

of the species of musical composition by which the metrical romances were always accompanied.

Verse 145. '*Awbile the Viscount hop'd &c.*'—

In the original, the Viscount represents to Aucassin the joys of Paradise and the pains of hell ; to which Aucassin replies by ridiculing his paradise, which he considers as the habitation of none but dirty monks and priests and hermits ; and declares his resolution of going to the devil, with whom he is sure of finding good company: kings, valiant knights and faithful squires, minstrels and jugglers, and, above all, his Nicolette. It has been already observed, that our ancestors in the *good old times* were not eminent for their pure taste in wit or morality.

Verse 177. '*Bold burghers, mounted on the embattled towers &c.*'

The following description of an ancient castle, taken principally from Dr. Henry's History of England, may serve as a comment on this passage, and explain the general scenery of the tale.

The situation of ancient castles was usually on an eminence, and near a river. The whole site of the castle was surrounded by a deep and broad ditch, sometimes dry, and sometimes filled with water. On the edge of this stood the wall, about eight or ten feet thick, and between twenty and thirty feet high, with a parapet, and a kind of embrasures, called *crenelles*, on the top. On this wall, at proper distances, were built square towers, two or three stories high, containing apartments for the principal officers, and adjoining to these were lodgings for the common servants or retainers, granaries, storehouses, and other necessary offices. On the top of the wall, and on the flat roofs of these buildings, stood the defenders of the castle when it was besieged, and thence discharged arrows, darts, and

stones on the besiegers. Before the great gate was an outwork, called a *barbacan*, or *antemural*, which was a strong and high wall with turrets, designed for the defence of the gate and drawbridge. The gate was also defended by a tower on each side, and rooms over the passage, which was closed by thick folding doors of oak, often plated with iron, and by an iron portcullis or grate let down from above. Within this outward wall was a large open space or court, called the *outer bayley*, in which stood commonly a church or chapel. Within this outer bayley was another ditch, wall, and gate, with their towers, inclosing the *inner bayley*; within which was the principal hill and tower, called the *keep* or *dungeon*. This tower, the palace of the prince or baron, and residence of the constable or governor, was a large square fabrick four or five stories high, having small windows in very thick walls, which rendered the apartments within it dark and gloomy. In it was the great hall, in which the owner displayed his hospitality, by entertaining his numerous friends and followers. The lower part consisted of dark rooms or vaults, often used for the confinement of prisoners; and hence, it has been inferred, this principal tower derived its name of *dungeon*. (See Henry, Vol. III. page, 460. 4to. edit.) The *dungeon*, however, (*donjon*, *dunjo*,) more probably receives its appellation from its situation, *in duno*, *seu colle*,—*on an eminence*; and as the most gloomy part of this gloomy edifice was employed as a prison, it has communicated its own name to all dismal places of confinement. (See Preface to Grose's Antiquities, Vol. I. pages 10. 12. edit. 1783.)

The following lines in Lydgate's 'Fall of Princes,' (Book VIII. chap. 24.) give support to this etymology of *dungeon*:—

‘ Thus, of Bretayn translated was the sonne,*
 ‘ Up to the rich sterry bright dongeon,
 ‘ Astronomers wel rehearse konne,
 ‘ Called Arthur’s constellation.’—

A representation of an ancient castle, correct enough to illustrate the above note, is given as the tail-piece to ‘ The Mule without a Bridle,’ after a plate in Grose’s *Antiquities*, though with the omission of the *inner* bayley and wall, a fortification by no means universal to such fastnesses.

The reader should, indeed, bear in mind, what the author of that work observes, (Preface, page 8,) that ‘ the general shape ‘ or plan of these castles depended entirely on the caprice of ‘ the architects, or the form of the ground intended to be occupied: neither do they seem to have confined themselves to ‘ any particular figure in their towers; square, round, and polygonal, oftentimes occurring in the original parts of the same ‘ building.’

Verse 214. ‘ *Ere Aucassin was dight, with hauberk on.*’—
Mail armour, of which the hauberk is a species, and which derived its name from *maille*, a French word for *mesh*, was of two kinds: *plate* or *scale* mail; (*squamata vestis*;) and *chain* mail (*hamata vestis*). It was originally used for the protection of the body only, reaching no lower than the knees; it was shaped like a carter’s smock-frock, and bound round the waist by a girdle. Gloves and hose of mail were afterwards added, and a hood, which when necessary was drawn over the head, leaving the face alone uncovered. To protect the skin from the impression of the iron net-work of the chain mail, a quilted lining was employed, which, however, was insufficient; and the

* Arthur, after the fatal battle of Camlan.

bath was used to efface the marks of the armour. The engraving prefixed to 'The Order of Knighthood,' exhibits the scale mail, the plate and scale mail conjointly, and the chain mail.

The hauberk was a complete covering of double chain mail. It consisted of a hood joined to a jacket, with sleeves, breeches, stockings, and shoes ; to which were added gloves or gauntlets of the same construction. Some hauberks opened before like a modern coat : others were closed like a shirt.

The chain mail of which they were composed was formed by a number of iron links, each link having others inserted into it, the whole exhibiting a kind of net-work, of which (in some instances at least,) the meshes were circular, with every link separately rivetted.

The hauberk was proof against the most violent blow of a sword ; but the point of a lance might pass through the meshes, or drive the wires into the flesh. To guard against this, a thick and well-stuffed doublet was worn underneath, called a *gambeson*, under which was commonly added an iron breast-plate, Hence, (or rather, perhaps, from the usage of the 14th and following centuries, when a cuirass was frequently worn over a shirt of mail,) the expression of 'piercing both plate and 'mail,' so common in our earlier poets.

In France, none but persons of a certain estate, called *un fief de haubert*, were permitted to wear a hauberk, which was the armour of a knight. Esquires might only wear a simple coat of mail, without the hood and hose. (See Grose on Ancient Armour.) Le Grand remarks that Aucassin, not being knighted, could not have appeared at a *tournament* with the hauberk : perhaps the forms relating to military dress were

relaxed in times of real service. On a journey the hauberk was rolled up, and carried behind the saddle.

Mail armour continued in general use in Europe, till about the year 1300, when it was gradually supplanted by *plate armour*, or suits consisting of large pieces or plates of solid iron, adapted to the different parts of the body. Conjointly with this, however, it was still often worn, as late even as the 16th century. Mail armour is at this day used in the East Indies, (See Grose's Asiatick Armour,) and also by the Circassians.

A representation of *plate armour*, with its cuirass, and its greeves, (iron boots,) is given in the head-piece to 'The Vale of False Lovers.' Grose (Ancient Armour, page 74, note,) thinks it most probable that plate armour might have been used by some princes and great men from the time of the Romans, though not commonly adopted.

Verse 225. '*His shield &c.*'—

The form of a horseman's shield was most commonly triangular; wide at the top for the protection of the breast, and tapering to the bottom for the sake of lightness. Shields were generally made of wood, covered with boiled leather, or some similar substance. To secure them in some sort from being cut through by the sword, they were surrounded with a hoop of metal. On the inside of the shield were one or more loops of leather, or else wooden handles, through which the left hand, or hand and arm, were passed, previous to combat: though sometimes the shield seems, even in battle, to have been only slung round the neck by a leathern thong.

Verse 227. '*Now right, now left, he whirls his sword on high.*'—
The swords were for the most part long, broad, and so heavy,

that to give full effect to a stroke, it was requisite to use both hands.

Verse 243. ‘*Then by the nasal seis’d &c.*’—

The helmet originally consisted only of a sort of scull-cap, from which sometimes a plate of iron, called a *nasal*, descended to the extremity of the nose. Many helmets of this sort appear in the engravings of the tapestry representing William the Conqueror’s expedition against England, published by Montfaucon in his *Monarchie Française*. The reader will see in the tail-piece to ‘*The Knight and the Sword*,’ in this volume, the exact form of a helmet with a nasal.

The helmet, in its improved state, was composed of two parts; the *headpiece*, which was strengthened within by several circles of iron; and the *visor* or *ventail*, which (as the names imply) was a sort of grating to *see* or *breathe* through, so contrived as by sliding in a groove, or turning on a pivot, to be raised or lowered at pleasure. Some helmets had a further improvement called a *bever*; from *beuveur*, a *drinker*, or from the Italian *bevere*, to *drink*.

Helmets varied very considerably in their shape in different ages. In the 13th century, (the time when the greater part of the *Fabliaux* were composed,) they were mostly made with a *flat* crown: a form of all others the worst calculated for defence. *Rounded* crowns (which were not unknown before,) grew into use afterwards; and crests and plumes were added for distinction or ornament.

To secure the helmet from the possibility of falling or being struck off, it was tied by several laces to the meshes of the hauberk; consequently when a knight was overthrown, it was necessary to undo these laces before he could be put to death:

though this was sometimes effected by lifting up the skirt of the hauberk, and stabbing him in the belly ; of which an instance occurs in ' The Knight and the Sword,' near the conclusion of the tale. The instrument of death was a small dagger, worn on the right side.

Verse 270. '*Palfreys, or dogs, or falcons train'd to fight.*'—The chase being the principal and almost the sole amusement of the feudal nobility, dogs and falcons were among the presents usually made, even to crowned heads.

Verse 271. '*Or choose you sumptuous furs, of vair, or gray.*'—Furs constituted one of the most costly articles of dress, and would therefore naturally compose part of a nobleman's ransom. Of these, the ermine and the sable were considered as the most valuable : the vair and the gray stood next in estimation. The vair was the skin of a species of squirrel, gray on the back, and white on the throat and belly. M. Le Grand concurs with other writers in supposing the fur derives its name of *vair* from this *variety* of its colours. A mantle lined with many of these skins of vair, exhibiting the form in which heralds delineate the variegations, is given as the tail-piece to ' The Canonesses and Gray Nuns.' The skins of vair were, according to Guil. le Breton, imported from Hungary. What particular animal furnished the *gris* or *gray*, is not clearly known.

Verse 348. '*But their long garb the glittering blades conceal'd.*'—The word in the original, for which *garb* is here substituted, is *cappe*. This, which was also spelt *chappe* and *cape*, was a large tunick reaching to the feet, and worn over the other garments by both sexes. It was put on like a shirt, having a wide plaited opening called a *goule*, or *gouleron*, and seems to

have been originally without sleeves. This dress is still worn by some of the monastick orders ; whose habits, however ridiculous they may appear to us, exhibit a faithful copy of the national dresses used at the time of their foundation. Louis the VII. prohibited the courtezans of Paris from wearing the *cappe*, that they might not be confounded with the modest part of the sex. In general the *cappe* was only worn in the open air ; and those designed for rainy weather were provided with a hood.

Verse 489. ‘ *Our gentle valet Aucassin betide.*’—

The title of *valet* or *varlet* was given to all young men of noble birth who had not been knighted. In Villehardouin, the son of the Eastern emperor is called the *Varlet of Constantinople*.

Verse 541. ‘ *Thrust deftly back the dislocated bone &c.*’—

Some degree of chirurgical and medical knowledge was considered, during the middle ages, as a very necessary female accomplishment ; and, while the occupations and amusements of the men naturally led to bruises and broken bones, it was likely that the ladies would acquire sufficient experience by the casualties that occurred in their own families. It accordingly appears from the Romances that many women of high birth were consulted in preference to the most learned professors, and it is probable that their attentive and compassionate solicitude may have frequently proved more efficacious than the nostrums of the faculty, even when assisted by the magical power of amulets, or the more orthodox energy of holy water. The male professors in medicine during these ages, were either ecclesiasticks, Greeks, or Jews. These last, if they were not very skilful, were singularly confident, since they consented to exercise their art under the most discouraging restrictions. By the

laws of Jerusalem promulgated by Godfrey of Bouillon, it is provided, that ‘ if any physician shall fail to cure a slave (these were infidel prisoners) he shall be condemned to pay for the said slave, or to substitute another in his place : if a Christian die under his hands, his goods shall be confiscated, and he shall be hanged, having been first whipped, and conducted to the gallows with an urinal in his hand, as a warning to others.’ (Targioni Viaggi per la Toscana, Vol. II.) The Jews usually studied in the Arabian universities in Spain, where it was supposed that magick was openly taught ; and for this reason were universally suspected and persecuted. One circumstance in their mode of practice appears wise : they employed their attention only on particular parts of medicine, and styled themselves ‘ physicians for the cure of wounds,’ ‘ physicians for the cure of fractures,’ &c. &c.

Verse 567. ‘ *And gain the spacious port of strong Torelore.*’— In the original, the description of the country of Torelore forms a most absurd episode, which is suppressed by M. Le Grand. The king is in bed, and pretends to be in labour, when Aucassin arrives ; and at the same time the queen, at the head of a female army, is making war with eggs, soft cheeses, and roasted apples. Aucassin puts a speedy end to this war, and by a severe beating exacts from the monarch a promise to abolish these stupid customs.

Verse 715. ‘ *Gave twenty marks of silver to the maid.*’— It was so difficult to estimate with tolerable correctness the relative value of the different coins which at this time circulated in the several kingdoms of Europe, and even in the several provinces of the same kingdom, that it was usual to make large payments by weight : and it is for this reason that we find

such frequent mention of *marks* of silver. The weight of the mark varied considerably in France; but that of Troyes was most generally adopted, on account of the ancient and considerable fairs held in Champagne. This was introduced into England at the time of the Norman conquest; and was equal to two-thirds of the Tower pound, which was coined into twenty shillings: consequently the *mark* was worth thirteen shillings and four-pence of that time, or about ten pounds of our present money.

NOTES TO

THE LAY OF THE LITTLE BIRD.

TYRWHITT defines a *Lay* to be 'a species of serious narrative 'poetry, of a moderate length, in a simple style and light 'metre.' It has been observed in the preface, that the *Lay* differed from the *Fabliau* in some circumstance of its musical accompaniment. In what this difference consisted it is perhaps impossible now to explain. From the uniform language of the minstrels it would seem that the *Lays* were sung from beginning to end, and that the *Fabliaux* were declaimed: yet M. Le Grand could not find any manuscripts of *Lays* accompanied by *notes*, while that of a very long *Fabliau* (Aucassin and Nicolette) is (in its metrical parts) *noted* throughout. See page 197.

This tale, as M. Le Grand observes, seems to be imitated from Pilpay. In the Indian fable, a countryman is possessed of a rose-bush, which every day produces a bud. A nightingale comes on several following days to peck the bud, and prevents its blowing. He is at length caught in a trap, but obtains his life by his entreaties, and out of gratitude indicates to the countryman a treasure hidden at the foot of the tree. In the English translation of Pilpay, the story varies somewhat from the above account.

Among Lydgate's works Mr. Warton mentions a poem called the *Chorle and the Bird*, translated from a *pamflete* in *Frensch*. This poem is also noticed in Tyrwhitt's introduc-

tory Discourse to Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, §.xxxviii. page 183 ; and is included in the list of Lydgate's works appended to Speght's Chaucer : but the translator has not the opportunity of ascertaining its relation to the French Fabliau.

The reader has already been referred in the preface to a collection of Fabliaux, published in 1756, from the manuscripts. As these volumes are scarce, and this is the first tale in the present work which will be found there, two or three occasional quotations may not be unacceptable.—It opens thus:—

LI LAIS DE L'OISELET.

- ' Il avint jadis à un temps,
- ' Bien a passé plus de cent ans,
- ' Qu'il estoit un riches vilains,
- ' De son nom ne sui pas certains ;
- ' Mais riches iert de grant maniere
- ' De prez, de bois, et de riviere,
- ' De tout ce qu'affiert à ric e home ;
- ' Le dire vous en viel la somme.
- ' Il avoit un manoir si bel,
- ' N'a borc, n'a vile, n'a chastel ;
- ' Et se je vos en veil conter,
- ' En tout le mont n'ot son per,
- ' Ne si bel ne si delitable.
- ' Li contes vos sembleroit fable,
- ' Qui vous en diroit la façon ;
- ' Je ne cuit que jamais face on
- ' Tel donjon, ne si riche tour.
- ' La riviere couroit entour,
- ' Qui tout enclooit le pourpris :
- ' Dedens ot vergier de haut pris,

‘ Qui d’yaue et d’air estoit enclos.

‘ Cil qui le fist ne fu pas fos,

‘ Ains fu un chevaliers gentis ;

‘ Après le pere l’ot li fis ;

‘ Puis le vendi à cel vilain ;

‘ Ainsis ala de main en main :

‘ Bien savez que par malvais hoir

‘ Dechieent viles et manoir.

.

‘ Cil qui le fist fut moult sachans :

‘ Il fu tos fais par nigromance,

‘ Si faisoit-on mainte esprouvance.’

In justice to the reader and to M. Le Grand, it is proper, however, to remark, that the correspondence between his abridgements and the publication of 1756 will not always be found so exact as in the above instance. For this his preface furnishes the following satisfactory reason :—‘ In my examination of ‘ manuscripts,’ says he, ‘ there were scarcely any Fabliaux of ‘ which I did not discover several copies, and these copies almost always differed from each other. Sometimes, indeed, ‘ they had nothing in common but the title ; sometimes the ‘ foundation of the tale was the same when every verse in it ‘ was different.—My practice has often been, therefore, following one copy principally, to transplant into it any pleasing ‘ additions or variations with which the other copies might ‘ furnish me.’

Verse 32. ‘ *And chas'd the impending agony of death.*’—

From this, and many other passages in the Fabliaux, it appears that our ancestors attributed very extraordinary virtues to spices, and considered them as essential to luxury. Among

the delights of the Land of Cokaygne (Warton, Vol. I. page 10.) are the following:—

- ‘ In the praer (field) is a tree
- ‘ Swithe likeful for to se,
- ‘ The rote is *gingeur* and *galingale*,*
- ‘ The siouns beth al *sedwale*.
- ‘ Trie *maces* beth the flure,
- ‘ The rind, *canel* (*cinnamon*) of swete odure :
- ‘ The frute, *gilofre* † of gode smakke.’

Verse 44. ‘ *And through the livelong year shut out the beam.*’—
A river, a fountain, a pine, a few flowers, and an orchard containing a mixture of fruit and forest trees, seem to have afforded all the materials which, in the opinion of our ancestors, were necessary for composing a beautiful garden. The pine was a particular favourite: every fountain in romance is shaded by them; and Charlemagne in his Capitularies, amongst other directions for the management of his farms, particularly insists on the planting of fruit trees, laurels, and pines.

Verse 51. ‘ *Match'd with these strains of linked sweetness wrought.*’—

See Milton's l'Allegro, line 139.

- ‘ In notes, with many a winding bout
- ‘ Of linked sweetness long drawn out.’

Verses 59,—68.

‘ *Listen, listen, to my Lay!*

.

‘ *Hear, and heed me, and be bless'd!*’—

The original is as follows:—

* Sweet cyperus.

† The same with clowe gilofre (clou de girofle—French); the clove.

- ' Li oisiax dist en son latin *
 " Entendez (fait il) à mon lai
 " Et chevalier et clerc et lai
 " Qui vous entremetez d'amors,
 " Et qui en souffrez les dolors :
 " Et à vos le di, damoiselles,
 " Qui i estes avenans et beles,"

M. Le Grand has suppressed the remainder of this song, in which the bird recommends great fervency in *devotion* and in *love*; God, he says, hates those hearts which are hard and hypocritical: so does Love. God suffers himself to be softened by prayer: so does Love. In short, he assures us that by serving both with zeal we shall ensure happiness in this world and the joys of paradise in the next. Froissart, the historian, who has left a large collection of amorous poems, informs us in his preface, that he undertook to compose them with the help of *God* and of *Love*.

Verse 69. ————— ' *but when he spied*

' *The carle draw near*'—' qui fel et convoitous estoit,'

' *With alter'd tone he cried—*

- " Car laisse ton corre riviere!
 " Donions, manoirs, tors, car dechiez!
 " Matissiez flors! herbes sechiez!
 " Arbres car lessiez le porter!
 " Ci se souloient deporter

* The word *latin* seems to have been used by the early French writers as equivalent to *language* in its widest signification. See La Combe's Dict. du Vieux Langage.

“ Gentis dames et chevalier,
“ Qui la fontaine avoient chier,
“ Qui a mon chant se delitoient,
“ Et par amors miex en amoient :
“ Si en faisoient les largescs,
“ Les cortoisies, les prouescs ;
“ Maintenoient chevaleries : &c.”

NOTES TO

THE PRIEST WHO HAD A MOTHER &c.

VERSE 13. ‘*And linings soft of lamb or squirrel’s skin.*’—

The use and estimation of furs has been already noticed. Furs were the common coverings of beds, besides forming the principal and most distinctive part of dress. The more precious furs, as *ermine* and *sable*, were reserved for kings, knights, and the principal nobility of both sexes. Persons of an inferior rank contented themselves with the *vair*, (probably the Hungarian squirrel,) and the *gris* or *gray*. The lower orders of citizens and burgesses with the common squirrel and lamb skins. The peasants wore cat skins, badger skins, &c. The mantles of our kings and peers, and the furred robes of the several classes of our municipal officers, are the remains of this once universal fashion.

Verse 52 ‘*Two hundred sure, and crowds of meaner sort.*’—

The enormous number of clients here represented as assisting at a bishops court, will not appear surprising to those who consider the almost unlimited power of the clergy during the middle ages. Their jurisdiction extended not only over the members of their own body, but comprised all persons who had taken the cross, all pilgrims, widows, and orphans, and *clerks*, a class of men which was extremely numerous because highly privileged. The causes of which they took cognizance were usury,

simony, adultery, schism, heresy, sacrilege; in short of all crimes which were *sinful*, or which had the most distant relation to any of the sacraments: as the settlements on brides, widows, younger children, wills, &c. &c.

Verse 124. '*Villain or clerk, nor think the bargain dear.*'—

It is well known that the word *villain*, which at present is applied to a vicious character, originally signified nothing more than a *country servant*. In the feudal times, the culture of the lands was executed by three sorts of persons. The first were the small allodial proprietors, who were freemen, though they sometimes voluntarily became the vassals of their more opulent neighbours, whose power was necessary for their protection. The other two classes were the *serfs* and the *villains*, both of which were slaves.

The *serfs* were in the lowest state of slavery. They did not enjoy, like the Africans in our colonies, the privilege of marrying whom they pleased, or of transmitting their little property to their children or friends. All the fruits of their labour belonged to the master whose land they tilled, and by whom they were fed and clothed. Their only recompense was a bare permission to exist. The *villains* were less miserable. Their situation seems to have resembled that of the Russian peasants at this day. They were, like the *serfs*, attached to the soil; and were transferred with it by purchase: but they only paid a fixed rent to the landlord, and had a right to dispose of any surplus that might arise from their industry.

With regard to the term *clerk*, it was of very extensive import. It comprehended, indeed, originally, such persons only as bore the clerical tonsure, amongst whom, however, might be found a multitude of married persons, artisans or

others: but in process of time a much wider criterion was established; every one that could read being accounted (in England at least,) a *clerk* or *clericus*, and allowed the benefit of clerkship,

NOTES TO THE CANONESSES AND GRAY NUNS.

It appears in the course of the original Fabliau, that these *gray nuns* were Cisterians or Bernardines, a branch of the Benedictine order. The present dress of the Bernardines is white; but M. Le Grand observes that in the ages when the Fabliaux were written, they wore garments of the natural colour of the wool. These would appear grayish, at least when not quite clean.

Verse 38. ‘*And all for justice sued, &c.*’—

M. Le Grand has here suppressed two descriptions very strongly marked with the taste of the age in which they were written: the one, of a full mass sung by birds, the nightingale officiating, with a sermon on love pronounced by the parrot, who afterwards gives absolution to all true lovers: the other of an allegorical repast which follows the mass, in which the first dish is composed of tender glances, the second of smiles, the third of cares and complaints, &c. The liquor is jealousy, which turns all their heads: luckily the dinner ends by a dish of kisses, of which the guests being permitted to take as many as they think fit, depart tolerably well satisfied with their entertainment.

Verse 59. ————— ‘*amice gray.*’—

See Milton’s *Paradise Regained*, Book IV. line 426.—

————— ‘*morning fair*

‘*Came forth with pilgrim steps in amice gray.*’—

NOTES TO

THE ORDER OF KNIGHTHOOD.

THIS tale is abridged in the *Cento Nouvelle Antiche* ; page 48, Nov. 51.

It is quoted by Fauchet, Duchesne, Chifflet, Du Cange, &c. and has been printed by Barbazan, and before him by M. Marin (Hist. de Saladin) from one of the manuscript copies (of which there were three, differing from each other,) in the collection of M. de Sainte-Palaye. Du Cange (Gloss. et notes sur Villehardouin) quotes a prose version of it, which appears from the language to be of a later date. There also exists in the manuscripts of the royal library in Paris, another 'Order of Knight-hood' in prose, and of a still later date, which is totally different, containing only instructions on the duties, the virtues, and dignity of knighthood.

Verse 5. ———— ' *Paynim land,*' —

This is not an uncommon instance of the ignorance of the old fablers with respect to the religion, morals, and manners of foreign nations. All who were not Christians were indifferently styled *Pagans and Saracens*. In the Romance of Charlemagne the Saxons are called Saracens. The real Saracens are universally represented in Romance as Pagans, *adoring Mahomet, Termagant, Apollo, and many other gods* : and, which is still more absurd, these pretended Pagans are sometimes represented as having among them cardinals who say mass.

Verse 6. ————‘*Saladin the Grand* ;’—

The name of this conqueror, who usurped the throne of the Soldans in Egypt, and atoned for his usurpation by his virtues, is familiar to every reader. Perhaps there cannot be a stronger attestation of his merit, and of the esteem in which he was universally held, than the praises which are here bestowed on him by a writer who naturally must have hated him, as the most formidable enemy of his country and religion.

Verse 23. ————‘*Tabaria's land ador'd* ;’—

Hugh, castellan of St. Omer, was one of the French nobles who followed Godfrey of Bouillon to the first crusade, and at the division of the kingdom of Jerusalem about the year 1102, received, as a recompense for his services, the lordship of Galilee, and the principality of *Tiberias*, which was afterwards by corruption called *Tabaria*. He was made prisoner in 1179.

Verse 36. ————‘*Bysants*’—

The Bysant or besant was a gold coin issued by the Greek emperors, and said to have been so called from *Byzantium*, the ancient name of Constantinople. D'Herbelot deduces its etymology from the Arabian *beizat zer* (golden egg), and says that the Saracens called by this name a Persian coin in the form of an egg, which they introduced into circulation in Asia. The word frequently occurs in the *Fabliaux*, and it appears from some of them, either that the bysant was current in France, and introduced there by the crusades, or that the name was indifferently applied to all sorts of gold coin. From a passage in Joinville it appears that the bysant was valued in his time at about ten sous, which were nearly equal to ten livres of the present day ; so that the ransom mentioned in the tale amounted to a million of French livres, or between forty and fifty thousand pounds Eng-

lish. Bysants were generally current in England before the Norman conquest. St. Dunstan purchased of King Edgar the estate of Hindon in Middlesex, for two hundred bysants. Dr. Henry values the bysant at nine shillings and four-pence, which agrees very nearly with Le Grand's calculation. Bysants or besants are among the English armorial bearings. (Guillim's Heraldry.)

Verse 67. ———— '*For from thy hand I claim &c.*'—

It is a certain fact that many Saracen generals were knighted by the hands of the Christians. Facardin, the emir who was opposed to St. Louis in Egypt, received the order from the Emperor Frederick; and Saladin himself from Humphrey de Toron, whom he took prisoner at the battle of Tiberias; so that the story in which our fabler has interwoven the details of the ceremony is not wholly without foundation.

Verse 71. ———— '*Holy Order.*'—The order of knighthood, like the priesthood, is indifferently called by the fablers the *holy order*, or *the order*. Indeed its object and its origin were in themselves highly respectable, besides which the enthusiastick religion of the age had conferred on it every mysterious rite that could render it more venerable: a sponsor, and the white garments appropriated to baptism; the imposition of hands, as in the confirmation; the ceremony of anointing, as in the extreme unction. The future knight confessed his sins; and received the communion. His hair was shaven on the forehead in imitation of the tonsure, and cut round like that of ecclesiasticks. He enjoyed the same privileges as they, and like them incurred the penalties of simony, if he purchased or sold the admission to the order. In short, it was supposed to impress an indelible character of sanctity; and hence a knight convicted of a heinous

crime was degraded with as much awful solemnity as a priest who had been guilty of sacrilege.

Verse 81. '*Mown was his beard.*'—

The Saracens wore beards, which was not the case in France in the reign of St. Louis, about whose time this Fabliau was probably written. In the prose version of the *Order of Knighthood*, Hugh causes the Soldan's beard to be combed, without shaving it. Fashions were altered; and the French then wore beards.

Verse 102. '*The snow-white shirt.*'—

Saladin does not receive his shirt till he has risen from his bed, because at this time it was customary to sleep naked. This is confirmed by the testimony of all the Fabliaux. From this practice have originated those ordinances of the early French kings, as well as many passages in their common law, by which a man and married woman who shall have been surprised *naked* in the same room, are declared guilty of adultery. In the Romance of Gerard de Nevers, an old woman who assists in undressing a young damsel, expresses the utmost astonishment at seeing her get into bed in her shift. In that of La Charette, Launcelot, being lodged by a lady who had become enamoured of his person, finds himself under the necessity of sharing her bed, being informed that she has no other to offer him: being determined, however, to preserve his fidelity to his mistress, he goes to bed in his shirt; which is considered by him, and understood by the lady, as a sufficient declaration of his intentions. In the miniatures which adorn many manuscript copies of the Fabliaux and Romances, the persons who are represented as in bed, are always naked. The author of the Contes d'Eutrapel

(printed in 1587) speaking of promises which are difficult to be performed, observes that they resemble those of a bride who should go to bed in her shift.

Verse 105. ‘*This scarlet robe,*’—

Every part of the armour and dress, (which, in the original *Fabliau*, are enumerated in detail,) as the belt, the sword, the spurs, the brown hose, the white coif, &c. are represented as the symbols of some moral excellence. These forced explanations are to be attributed to the general taste for allegory which had been disseminated by the theologians of the age.

Verse 111. ‘*Now all was sped*’—

Saladin being an infidel, the author does not mention the confession, the vigil of arms in the church, nor the communion.

Verse 112. ‘*The custom’d stroke*’—

It was at first customary to give the knight a slight blow, as if to announce to him that this was the last affront he was allowed to submit to: instead of this blow, which was called *la colée*, (from the Latin word *colaphus*) were afterwards introduced three strokes with a sword on the shoulder or neck (*le col*). The knight then received an embrace; from whence this part of the ceremony was called the *acolade*: on pressing occasions, as for instance when the order was conferred on the field of battle, the *acolade* only was employed.

Verse 116. ——— ‘*The fourfold discipline &c.*—

We shall not appreciate very highly the morality of an age which reduced the whole practice of virtue and religion to the four following points, viz. adherence to truth, succouring of dames, hearing mass, and fasting. In like manner the *Miracles*, the metrical legends, and devotional tales, represent the perfection

of Christianity as consisting of fasting, hearing mass, and corporal mortification ; to which, though rarely, the practice of alms-giving is added.

Verse 137. ———— ‘ *Ten knights thy lore hath freed.* ’—

It was so necessary for the new knights to display their liberality on this great occasion, that it was customary among the nobles, when their eldest sons were received into the order, to levy a particular tax on their vassals for that purpose. This was one case of the three *loyal aids*. The other aids were levied for the purpose of paying the lord's ransome, or to defray the expence of marrying his eldest daughter.

Verse 156. ‘ *Full fifty Emirs.* ’—

The word used in the original is *amiraux* (*admirals*) a corruption of *emir* or *amir*, a term which the Arabians applied to all who were entrusted with great offices, whether civil, or military. In France, the word has been used to signify a particular military command ; and in the rest of Europe it is restricted to the marine.

The author concludes his Fabliau with high encomiums on knighthood, representing its members as the best defenders of religion and property, and the surest bulwarks against the Saracens, Albigenses, and other miscreants : for this reason, says he, they were permitted to enter the church completely armed, and to put to death any person who should fail in respect to the holy sacrament. In the life of St. Louis, by Joinville, that monarch relates to the historian a story of an old and crippled knight who terminated a religious dispute with a Jew by felling his antagonist

with a stroke of his crutch ; and adds, ‘ a layman who hears
‘ the Christian religion evil spoken of, should defend it with
‘ his sword alone, which he should thrust into the belly of his
‘ adversary as far as it will go.’

NOTES TO THE GENTLE BACHELOR.

THE translator has here employed the 7-or-8-syllable couplet, which is the measure of the original extract, conforming also to the single line and triplet with which it begins. The harshness of imagery he has also endeavoured to retain, with exception of one passage (line 40 to 44) which may be literally rendered as follows:—

- ‘ Nor doth he demand other sugar-plums
- ‘ Than the points of swords broken ;
- ‘ And the iron of lances for mustard,
- ‘ It is a food which much pleaseth him ;
- ‘ And the broken meshes of hauberks for pepper.’

In the original—

- ‘ Ne ne demande autre dragies
- ‘ Que pointes d’espees brisies ;
- ‘ Et fers de glaive à la moustarde,
- ‘ C’est un mes qui forment li tarde ;
- ‘ Et haubers desmaillies au poivre.’

The two next lines are very animated:—

- ‘ Et veut la grant poudriere boivre
- ‘ Avec l’aleine des chevaus.’

Verse 1. ‘ *What gentle bachelor is he &c.*—

The nobility of Europe was usually divided into three orders: bannerets, knights, and squires. The banneret, whether

duke, earl, marquis, or baron, was a great landholder, who was able to conduct under his *banner* a certain number of gentlemen who were his immediate tenants. This banner was square. The standard or *pennon* of the knights was pointed. The poorer knights were generally called (*les bas chevaliers*) bachelors. There were, however, some bachelors who were so by the tenure of their lands, and who, when knighted, were called knights-bachelors. As to the squires, it has been already observed in the preface that they were candidates for knighthood.

Verse 3. '*Rock'd and cradled in a shield.*'—

Some shields were extremely curved in their breadth ; so that, if laid on the ground with the inside uppermost, they might very well have answered the purpose of a cradle.

Verse 11. '*Ponderous as a mace his fist &c.*'—

The *mace* (*masse* or *massue*) was used both in battles and tournaments. It was a common weapon with ecclesiasticks, who, in consequence of their tenures, frequently took the field, but were by a canon of the church forbidden to wield the sword. The mace was generally made of iron, but (the handle at least) was sometimes of wood. In figure it much resembled a chocolate mill. A leathern thong or a chain was passed through a hole in the handle, by which the mace might be suspended from the saddle-bow, and secured from falling out of the hand.

NOTES TO

THE MANTLE MADE AMISS.

M. LE GRAND informs us, that in the ancient French manuscripts this tale is called *Court Mantel*; (*the short mantle*;) but that the copy he had chosen for abridgement was a prose one of the sixteenth century, printed by Didier, under the title of *Le Manteau mal taillé*. Some magical test of female fidelity seems to have been fashionable among the romance writers. In this tale we have a mantle: in the romance of Tristan, and in that of Perceval, it is a drinking-horn or cup; a fiction which has been borrowed both by Ariosto and Fontaine; as the mantle probably suggested to Spenser his Florimel's girdle. 'The Boy and Mantle' in Percy's *Reliques of English Poetry* has rendered the story familiar to every reader.

Verse 2. '*Scans with delight the deeds of Arthur's day*,'—Arthur, as Geoffrey of Monmouth informs us, was the son of Uther Pendragon, King of Britain, by Igera (or Iögerne) wife of Gorlois, Duke of Cornwall. The intercourse of Uther with this lady was effected by the assistance of the enchanter Merlin, who transformed the monarch into the likeness of Gorlois her husband. Gorlois (during this transaction) being slain in battle, Uther marries Igera; and in due time Arthur is born. The classical reader needs hardly be reminded of Milton's *Epitaphium Damonis*, line 166—

'Tum gravidam Arturo, fatali fraude, Iögernen,

'Mendaces vultus, assumptaque Gorlois arma,

'Merlini dolus.'—

(In the second series of notes to this tale, article Ewaine, is a quotation from Gruffydd Llwyd, alluding to Uther.)

Arthur, one of the *neuf preux* or *nine worthies*, is represented in romance as King of Great Britain, conqueror of Ireland, Gothland, Dacia or Denmark, Norway, and Gaul. He carried to the highest pitch of glory the order of knights of the *round-table*, instituted by his father, and so called from a mysterious table, the gift of the enchanter Merlin. Arthur possessed a magical sword named *Escalibor* or *Caliburn*; a word, according to the English *Mort d'Arthur*, (edit. 1634, Part I. chap. 28) signifying *cut-steel*: (possibly its etymon may be the Latin *chalybs*: it has not been met with, by the translator, as a Welch word.) His standard was a steel dragon which vomited flames. Notwithstanding these and other advantages, he was at length (A. D. 542) sorely wounded in a battle against his rebellious nephew Modred; and, being borne away in a barge by ladies to the vale of Avalon, either died, or was removed for a season from this world.

The reader who seeks for a spirited epitome of Arthur's exploits, principally as recorded by Geoffrey of Monmouth, will find it in the 4th song of Drayton's *Poly-Olbion*. He will there be told, by a choir of Welch nymphs, of—

- ' The richness of the armes their well-made worthie wore,
- ' The temper of his sword, the try'd *Escalaboure*,
- ' The bignes and the length of *Rone* his noble speare,
- ' With *Pridwin* his great shield, and what the prooffe could
- ' beare;
- ' His baudrick how adorn'd with stones of wondrous price,
- ' The sacred virgin's shape he bore for his device.'

And anon—

- ‘ How he himself at Badon bore that day
 ‘ When at the glorious gole his British scepter lay :
 ‘ Two daies together how the battell stronglie stood :
 ‘ Pendragon’s worthie sonne who waded there in blood,
 ‘ Three hundred Saxons slew with his owne valiant hand.’
 ‘ And, after these, in France th’ adventures him befell,
 ‘ At Paris, in the lists, where he with Flolloio fought :
 ‘ For best advantage how they traversed their grounds,
 ‘ The horrid blowes they lent, the world-amazing wounds.

Afterwards——

- ‘ How great Rython’s selfe hee slew in his repaire,
 ‘ (Who ravisht Howell’s neece, young Hellenia the faire,)
 ‘ And for a trophy brought the giant’s coat away,
 ‘ Made of the beards of kings.’—————
 ‘ Then, by false Mordred’s hand, how last hee chanc’t to fall.
 ‘ The howre of his decease, his place of buriall.’

And, in Selden’s illustrations of song 3d, will be found the following account of the discovery of ‘ Great Arthur’s tombe’——

- ‘ Henry II. (A. D. 1154 to 1189) in his expedition towards
 ‘ Ireland, entertayned by the way in Wales with Bardish songs,
 ‘ wherein he heard it affirmed, that in Glastenbury (made
 ‘ almost an ile by the river’s embracements,) Arthur was buried
 ‘ twixt two pillars, gave commandement to Henry of Blois, then
 ‘ abbot, to make search for the corps : which was found in a
 ‘ wooden coffin some 16 foote deepe : but, after they had dig-
 ‘ ged 9 foot, they found a stone, on whose lower side was fixt
 ‘ a leaden crosse with his name inscribed, and the letter side of
 ‘ it turn’d to the stone. He was then honored with a sumptuous monument ; and, afterward, the sculs of him and his
 ‘ wife Guinever were taken out (to remain as separat reliques

‘ and spectacles,) by Edward Longshanks and Elianor. The
 ‘ Bards’ songs suppose that, after the battell of Camlan in
 ‘ Cornwall, where trayterous Mordred was slaine, and Arthur
 ‘ wounded, Morgain le fay conveyed the body hither to cure it:
 ‘ which done, Arthur is to return (yet expected) to the rule
 ‘ of his country. Read these, attributed to the best of Bards.
 ‘ (Taliessin. — ap. Pris. defens. Hist. Brit.) expressing as
 ‘ much :

‘ —————Morgain suscepit honore

‘ Inque suis thalamis posuit super aurea regem

‘ Fulcra, manuque sibi detexit vulnus honestâ

‘ Inspexitque diu : tandemque redire salutem

‘ Posse sibi dixit, si secum tempore longo

‘ Esset, et ipsius vellet medicamine fungi.’

‘ Englisht in meeter thus by the author : (M. Drayton :)——

‘ —————Morgain with honor took,

‘ And in a chaire of state doth cause him to repose ;

‘ Then with a modest hand his wounds she doth unclose,

‘ And, having searcht them well, she bad him not to doubt

‘ He should in time be cur’d, if he would stay it out,

‘ And would the med’cine take that she to him would give.’

See also Lydgate’s *Fall of Princes*, Book VIII. chap. 24. Refer to note on ‘ *Lay of Sir Lanval*,’ verse 378.

Roger Hoveden, and Walter of Coventry, report that Richard I. presented Tancred King of Sicily with Arthur’s sword Caliburn, said to have been found in his coffin.

Verse 12. ‘ *When royal Arthur will’d high court to hold,*’—

In the early feudal times, the kings and sovereign princes kept no regular court, but, like their barons, lived privately in their castles or cities, with their families and the great officers of their

household, and subsisted on the revenues of their domains. It was only on the three or four great annual festivals of the church that they ordinarily convoked their barons, and displayed their magnificence. These assemblies were called *Cours Plenieres*, and in the present translations are indiscriminately rendered *plenar, plenary, high, full, or open, courts*. They were announced in the different cities by heralds and publick messengers, and were resorted to not only by the nobility of the country, but by strangers. At these seasons of general festivity were united all the pleasures and pastimes of those ages: banqueting, dancing, minstrels, buffoons and jugglers, (*jongleurs*,) dancing-bears &c. At the same time presents of clothes and money, under the name of *largess*, were distributed to the populace with inconceivable profusion.

The *plenary courts* seem to have been an imitation of the famous *diets* established by Charlemagne, and were continued in France by Hugh Capet and his successors till the reign of Charles VII. who very wisely abolished them.

Verse 23. ‘*But Mourgue the fay bethought her to prevent.*’—Mourgue, Morgane, or Morgain, was sister to King Arthur; and was instructed in the art of magick by Merlin. Being one day in bed with her lover Sir Guiomars, she was surprised by Guenever, Arthur’s queen, who had the indiscretion to make the story publick. Mourgue retired from court, to concert projects of vengeance, and this fatal mantle was one of the many artifices she devised for that purpose. Mr. Warton supposes her name to be derived from *Mergian Peri*, one of the most eminent Asiatick fairies.

Of beings distinguished by the name of fairies, two species may be observed in romance. The one resembles the nymphs,

naiads, and dryads, of classical mythology : supernatural beings, having a proper and inherent power : of these the tales of Lanval and Gruélan furnish examples. The other sort are merely witches ; such are Mourgue, Viviana, and the fairy of Burgundy ; all scholars of Merlin. These conducted their operations by the intervention of demons. In *the Journal of Paris in the reigns of Charles VI. and Charles VII.* it is asserted that the maid of Orleans, in answer to an interrogatory of the doctors, whether she had ‘ *ever assisted at the assemblies held at the fountain of the fairies near Domprein, round which the evil spirits dance ?* ’ confessed, that she had, at the age of twenty-seven, often repaired to ‘ *a beautiful fountain in the country of Lorraine, which she named the good fountain of the fairies of our Lord.* ’

Merlin, according to Geoffrey of Monmouth and the romances, was the issue of a demon and a virgin. He was born in Britain, and was very serviceable to Arthur by his proficiency in magick, which, however, was at last the cause of his own destruction. Having communicated to his mistress, the young and beautiful Viviana, two spells ; the one to lay her parents asleep, and the other to confine them whenever she might think proper ; she employed the first to protect her chastity from his attempts, and made a more cruel use of the second, confining him in a forest, (other MSS. say in a tomb,) in which he died. His spirit, however, still hovered about the place, and his voice was often heard by passengers. This catastrophe is alluded to by Spenser. (*Faerie Queene*, Book III. canto 3.) The story of the tomb is adopted by Ariosto, who places it in the neighbourhood of Poitiers.

Among the most extraordinary feats of Merlin, may be mentioned his transporting from the mountain of Kildare in Ireland

to the plain of Ambresbury in Wiltshire, in memory of the Britons treacherously slain by Hengist, those huge blocks of stone called Stone-henge. These blocks (entitled the Giants' dance,) had been previously carried to Kildare by giants from the farthest coasts of Africa, and every stone possessed some healing virtue. See Geoffrey of Monmouth, Thompson's translation, edit. 1718, page 246.

Verse 24. '*To work fair Guenever the queen's annoy.*'—Guenever (in the British bards, Gwenhwyfar; in Geoffrey's Latin, Guanhumara;) was the wife of Arthur, and the mistress of Sir Launcelot du Lake, one of the most distinguished knights of the round-table. If Arthur regarded female fidelity as a principal ingredient of conjugal happiness, he certainly was unwise in marrying Guenever, since, as appears by Mort d'Arthur, (Part I. chap. 45. edit. 1634.) 'Merlin warned the king privily that Guenever was not wholesome for him to take to wife, for he warned him that Launcelot should love her, and she him againe.'

Verse 33. '*Join'd with Sir Gawaine Arthur did recline,*'—Sir Gawaine (in the British Bards, Gwalchmai; and in the Latin of Geoffrey of Monmouth, Walganus;) was nephew to King Arthur, by his sister Morgause, married to Lot, who (according to Geoffrey) was by Arthur made king of Norway. Sir Gawaine was one of the most famous knights of the round-table, and is characterized among the French romancers as the *sage* and *courteous* Gawaine. To this Chaucer alludes in his '*Squieres Tale,*' where the strange knight '*salueth*' all the court

' With so high reverence and observance,
' As well in speeche as in his countenance,

‘ That Gawain with his olde curtesie,
 ‘ Though he were come agen out of faerie,
 ‘ Ne coude him not amenden with a word.’

In the English *Mort d'Arthur*, (edit. 1634, Part I. chap. 6, and 36,) Sir Gawaine's father Lot is styled ‘ King of Low-
 ‘ thean and of Orkeney :’ his mother is called Morgause, and is represented as having four sons : namely, Gawaine, Agravaine, Gaheris, and Gareth.

Verse 87. ‘ *Let her with all her comely train attend &c.*—
 The etiquette of Arthur's court did not, it seems, admit of the mixed society of men and women during meal-times, in one common apartment. ‘ At last’ (says Geoffrey of Monmouth, edit. 1718, page 303.) ‘ when divine service was over at both
 ‘ churches, the king and queen put off their crowns, and putting on their lighter ornaments, go to the banquet ; he to one
 ‘ palace with the men, and she to another with the women.
 ‘ For the Britons still observing the ancient custom of Troy,
 ‘ the men and women used to celebrate their festivals apart.’

Verse 115. ‘ *Thereat Sir Ewaine, good King Urien's son.*’—
 Sir Ewaine or Ywain (in Geoffrey, *Eventus* ; in French, *Yvain* ;) was son of King Urien or Urience, by his wife Mourgue or Morgain the fairy, who was Arthur's sister. (See *Mort d'Arthur*, 1634, Part I. chap. 36.) Mr. Tyrwhitt (in his notes on Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, edit. 1775, page 320,) quotes an English metrical romance of Ywain and Gawain. MS. Cott. Galb. E. 1x. See a subsequent note to this tale for a further account of Sir Ewaine.

Verse 132. ‘ *For flouting jests Sir Kay was most renown'd.*’—
 Sir Kay (In the French, *Messire Queux* ; and in Geoffrey of

Monmouth, Caius;) was foster-brother of Arthur; and also seneschal, or superintendant of his feasts. Sir Kay is represented by the romance writers as caustick and fond of scandal, always boasting of his prowess, often fighting, and as often beaten. He is seldom mentioned but as an object of ridicule. For some further notice of him, see a subsequent note to this tale.

Verse 203. ‘*Twas Karados Brise-bras, approv’d of all &c.*’— ‘To be ignorant, is painful;’ says Dr. Johnson; ‘but it is ‘dangerous to quiet our uneasiness by the delusive opiate of ‘hasty persuasion.’ The writers of romance, however, were as regardless of danger, when in pursuit of glory, as are the heroes they celebrate. They spurred furiously forward, in contempt of costume, chronology, and geography: nor do they appear to have been much more embarrassed by etymological impediments. If they met with a proper name among the bards of Britain or Armorica which seemed to accord in sound and meaning with any words in their own language, they presently (like the ancient Greeks in Bryant’s Mythology,) equipped it with a derivation from that quarter. This has probably been the case with Sir Kay: (in British, Cai:) his *office* in the court of Arthur being, according to Geoffrey of Monmouth, that of *seneschal*, or *sewer*, (*superintendant of feasts*,) occasioned his *name* to be detorted into *Queux*, a word anciently signifying *cuisinier*, (*cook*,) in the French language. (See Montfaucon’s *Monarchie Française*, Vol. II. page 19. Also *Dictionnaire du vieux Langage*, par Lacombe—‘Isembert étoit *grant queulx* ‘de France sous Louis IX. in 1250, nom affecté alors à l’office du palais qui avoit inspection sur les cuisines du roi, et sur tout ce qui regardoit la service de sa table.’) The experi-

ment seems pretty clearly, however, to have been tried upon Sir Karados Brise-bras, and is happily attended with a tolerable coincidence of signification. In '*Trioedd ynys Prydain*,' or *the Triades of the Island of Britain*, one of the most valuable fragments now extant of the ancient British tongue, and composed, as appears, between the third and seventh centuries, (Jones's Relicks, p. 9. edit. 1794.) we find *Caradoc Freich-fras*, or *strong-armed Caradoc*; from *braich*, an arm, and *brâs*, thick, or strong. (In the Armoric dialect *brêch* is an arm, and *brâs* is great.) The appellation of *Brise-bras* or *break-arm*, employed by the French fabler, may hence fairly date its origin. For a further account of Sir Karados, the reader is referred to a subsequent note to this tale.

Verse 255. ————— 'So stay thee, story mine!

'Come, bear around a brimmed bowl of wine!'—

This concluding passage is added from the metrical original—

'Li Romans faut: veez-ci la fin,

'Or vous devez boire du vin.'

(See Le Grand, Vol. III. page 106, notes to 'Pauvre Mercier.')

The prose fabliau, with some humour, breaks off abruptly on the point of publishing the successful candidate.

It has been already intimated in the preface, that the French Trouveurs borrowed many of their subjects from the Bards of Britain and Armorica. (*Ar-y-môr-ucha*, the country on the upper sea; by the natives of Wales more frequently called *Llydaw*: * which woorde (*Llydaw*) seemeth to me (says H. Llwyd)

‘ to be derived from the Latine woorde *Littus*, signifying the ‘ *shoare*.’) As the present tale affords a convenient opportunity, the reader may not be displeased at seeing a few notices which have occurred to the translator, thrown together in support of this opinion.

Arthur—(To begin then with one of the most celebrated heroes of the French romancers,) and his royal consort *Guenever*, are both mentioned in the following passage of the *Afallennau* or *orchard*, a poem composed by *Myrddyn Wyllt*, or *Merlin the Wild*, who flourished in the sixth century, was a pupil of the celebrated *Taliessin*, and fought under the banner of *Arthur* at the fatal battle of *Camlan*, A. D. 542.—

- ‘ A mi ddysgoganaf dyddaw etwa
- ‘ Meddrawd ac *Arthur* modur tyrfa
- ‘ *Camlan* darmerthan difieu yna
- ‘ Namyn saith ni ddyraith o’r cymmanfa.
- ‘ Edryched *Wenhwysfar* wedi ei thraha
- ‘ Ban atfedd *Cadwaladr*
- ‘ Eglwysig bendefig a’i tywysa.
- ‘ Gwaeth i mi a dderfydd heb ysgorfa !
- ‘ Lleas mab *Gwenddydd*, fy llaw a’i gwna !’

That is—‘ Yet shall my song of prophecy announce the coming again of *Meddrawd*, (*Modred*,) and of *Arthur*, monarch of the host ; again shall they rush to the battle of *Camlan* : two days will the conflict last, and only seven escape from the contest. Then let *Wenhwysfar* (or *Gwenhwysfar*, that is, *Guenever*,) remember the crimes she has been guilty of, when *Cadwalader* repossesses when an ecclesiastical hero leads the warriors to battle.—‘ Alas !—for more lamentable is my destiny ! and hope affords

‘no refuge! The son of Gwenddydd is dead! slain by my accursed hand!’—(See Jones’s *Musical Relicks*, folio, London, 1784 and 1794.)

The Welch writers (with whom, as with the Druids, the number *three* seems to have been held in peculiar estimation,) assign to Arthur *three* consorts of the name of *Gwenhwyfar*. (In the preceding quotation from *Myrddyn Wyllt* the *G* is dropt euphoniæ gratiâ; to avoid the harshness of colliding consonants; a practice justified by Welch prosody.) The lady in question was daughter to *Gogrfan Gawr*: that is, according to modern Welch, *the giant Gogyrfan*. With more propriety, probably, it would be rendered *Prince Gogyrfan*; for *Gawr*, in ancient British, signifies not only *a man of great size*, but also *a king* or *chieftain*. Of this perhaps Geoffrey of Monmouth might not be aware, since he is so liberal of his giants. (See Evans’s *Specimens of Bardick Poetry*, page 34, note: edit. 1764.) Geoffrey speaks but of *one Guanhumara*, and her he represents as descended from a noble family of Romans, educated under Duke Cadur, and surpassing in beauty all the women of the island. (Book IX. chap. 9.) Arthur’s *round-table* is noticed by Melchin, a British writer temp. Vortipor. Melchin is quoted by Harding, who calls him Mevinus; by Bale, who calls him M. Avallonius; and by Leland, who styles him one of the lights of Britain’s antiquaries. The historian Nennius, who lived about 400 years before Geoffrey of Monmouth, particularizes 12 battles of Arthur in his 62d and 63d chapters. (See Gale’s XV. *Scriptores*, p. 114.) The last battle he fought upon Badon-hill is noticed by Taliessin, chief Bard temp. Maelgwyn-Gwynedd, about A. D. 570.—

‘Gwae yntwy yr ynfidion pan fy warth Fadon

- ‘ Arthur ben haelion y lafneu by gochion
- ‘ Gwnaeth ar y alon gwaith gwyr gofynion
- ‘ Gofynion gwaed dared mach deyrn y gogledd
- ‘ Heb drais heb drossedd.’

That is—‘ O miserable those’ (Saxons) ‘ at Badon-hill, whose blood was there shed by Arthur, chief of nobles ; in revenge for nobles by them slain in the north, whose valour long supported the kings thereof, without violence, without transgression.’

Lewis, in his ancient history of Britain, p. 175, says that King Uther, after the death of Gorlois, and birth of Arthur, married the widow *Eigr*, (the *Igern*a of Geoffrey of Monmouth,) by whom he had a daughter named *Anne*, whom he married to *Lot*, Earl of Liel ; of which marriage Meddrawd and Gwalchmai were the issue. Geoffrey of Monmouth Book VIII. chap. 20) also tells us that by *Igern*a Uther had a daughter named *Anne*. This *Anne* must therefore be the *Morgause* of Mort d’Arthur. (Edit. 1634.)

The mountain *Gader* in Brecknockshire is styled *Cadair Arthur*. (*Arthur’s Chair*.) A river called *Gargwy*, or *Garwy*, descends from it, which possibly may have taken its name from *Garwy hir*, (*Garwy the tall*,) who is noticed by the Bards as one of the warriors of Arthur. Mr. Pennant thinks *Garwy* is the Sir Gareth of romance.

Sir Gawaine—In the British bards a *Gwalchmai* (of which name there were two cotemporary worthies,) is recorded as ‘ one of the three golden-tongued heroes of Britain :’ hence probably originated Sir Gawaine’s character of *sage* and *courteous* in the pages of romance ; though the golden-tongued *Gwalchmai* seems not to have been the nephew of Arthur, being called *Gwalch-*

mai *mab Gwyar*,' ('Gwalchmai son of Gwyar'). The bard *Cynddelw Brydydd mawr*, about the year 1160, alludes to the prowess of a Gwalchmai in the following lines—

'Gwersyll torfoedd tew llew lladdai,

'Gorsaf tarf, taerfalch fal *Gwalchmai*.'

That is

'Like a lion, he mowed down thick troops in battle ;

'Like *Gwalchmai* he was fierce in chasing his enemies.'

Evans's *Dissertatio de Bardis*, edit. 1764, page 84.

A Gwalchmai was enamoured of the beautiful *Olwen*, daughter of *Ysbyddaden Ben Cawr*, a prince of North Britain. Such were her charms, that we are told, 'Pedair meillion a derddynt.'—
'Four trefoils sprang up wherever she placed her foot.' (See notes to *Dafydd ap Gwilym*.) A Gwalchmai was nephew to King Arthur, and *half*-brother to the traitor Meddrawd or Modred : But see the foregoing note. Geoffrey also makes him *whole* brother. (Book IX. chap. 9.) A Gwalchmai was slain in the civil wars between Arthur and Meddrawd. With respect to King *Lot*, the father of Arthur's nephew Gawaine or Gwalchmai, his name, says Lewis Morris, a judicious Welch antiquary, was *Llew* ; (*ap Cynfarch*;) and should therefore have been rendered in Latin by the word *Leo*, not *Lotho*, (*Lot*;) as Geoffrey of Monmouth has erroneously translated it.

Sir Ewaine.—*Ewein*, or *Owain*, *ap Urien*, is celebrated by the Bards Taliessin and Llywarch-Hên, (both of whom flourished in the sixth century,) as well as in the historical Triades. In one of these he is styled 'one of the three blessed rulers of 'the Isle of Britain.' *Eluned*, his mistress, possessed a ring, esteemed 'one of the thirteen rarities of Britain ;' which (like the wondrous ring of Gyges) would render the wearer invisible.

The Bards sing, that the lover of Eluned being in doleful confinement between the portcullis and gate of a castle, was, through the assistance of this ring, released by his mistress. (See Owen's notes to *Dafydd ap Gwilym*, page 535.

Urien ap Cynfarch, the father of *Ewein* or *Owain*, was by Arthur made king of Reged, a territory in Caledonia. His situation here was far from peaceful, owing to the frequent irruptions of the Saxons. Taliessin, in poems which are still extant, enumerates twelve pitched battles which he fought. That of *Argoed Llwyfein* is particularly described. It was fought with *Flamddwyn*; (so the Britons called *Ida*, the first Saxon king of Northumberland;) and *Ewein* or *Owain* there commanded his father's forces, as the following passage indicates:—

‘ Atorelwis Flamddwyn fawr drybestawd,
 ‘ A ddodynt gyngwystlon, a ynt parawd?
 ‘ Yr atebwys *Owain* ddwyrain ffossawd,
 ‘ Ni ddodynt iddynt, nid ynt parawd!
 ‘ A Chenau mab Coel by ddai gymmwyawg llew
 ‘ Cyn talai o wystl nebawd!’—

That is—

‘ Flamddwyn, violently agitated, demanded,
 “ If pledges are to be given, are they ready?”
 ‘ *Owain*, of the mighty stroke, replied,
 “ They shall not be given! they are not ready!”
 ‘ And Cenau, the son of Coel, (exclaimed,) ‘ the lion
 “ shall be vanquished
 “ Before any one shall give a pledge!”—

This battle of *Argoed Llwyfein*, and the prowess of *Ewein*

or *Owain*, long survived in the memory of the Bards: ‘*Es-cynnu ar llu ar lle Ewein*,’—says Einiawn, in the 13th century—

‘Ysgymmod gorfod, gorfalch am brein,
 ‘Ysgymmyn gwerlyn, gwerlid gofein,
 ‘Ysgymydd clodrydd, Kulwydd a *Llwyfein*.’—

That is—‘When thou invadedst thine enemies, where *Ewein* thy predecessor invaded them in former times; full proud was thy heart in dividing the spoils: it happened as in the battles of Kulwydd and *Llwyfein*.’ (See Evans’s *Specimens of Bardick Poetry*, pages 21 and 122, edit. 1764.)

In a poem of Gruffydd Llwyd, A. D. 1400, addressed to Owain Glyndwr, (‘the great magician, damn’d Glendower,’ of Shakspeare;) we find the following allusion to *Ewein*, or *Owain*, *ap Urien*:—

‘Cefaist rammant yn d’antur,
 ‘Uthr Bendragon, ddwyfron ddur:
 ‘Pan ddialawdd, (gawdd goddef,)
 ‘Ei frawd, a’i rwysg, a’i frwydr ef.
 ‘Hwyliaist, siwrneaist, helynt,
 ‘*Owain ab Urien* gain gynt
 ‘Pan oedd fuan ymwanwr
 ‘Y marchog duog o’r dwr.’

That is—‘Thou hast found an omen in thine enterprizes, like Uther Pendragon, steel-breasted, (or, clad in mail,) when he revenged, (what could not have been borne without indignation,) his brother’s grandeur and battles. Thou hast travelled by land and by sea in the conduct of thine affairs, like *Owain ap Urien* in days of yore, when with activity he encountered the black knight of the water.’ (See Jones’s *Mu-*

sical Relicks, 1784, and 1794. Also Ellis's Memoirs of Owain Glyndwr.)

Sir Kay—In the *Triades* the name of *Cai* occurs with considerable distinction. He is associated with Trystan, and with Huail, and is styled one of 'The three crowned chiefs of battle of the isle of Britain.' From the same passage we learn, that there was one who was supreme over these three, namely, *Bedwyr mab Pedrawg*. (*Bedwyr* the son of *Pedrawg*.) This is unquestionably the Duke of Normandy, and butler of Arthur, *Bedver*; whom Geoffrey of Monmouth represents as appearing officially at the festival of Arthur's coronation, followed with a thousand attendants, in variety of habits, who waited with all kinds of cups and drinking vessels.

Sir Karados Brise-bras—In Welch, as has been already observed, *Caradoc Freich-fras* or *strong-armed Caradoc*. He was, according to their writers, son to Gwennllian, (daughter of Brychan, Prince of Brecknock,) by Ller Molwynen, Lord of Gloucester. Caradoc made himself, by conquest, Lord of Ferlex, the ancient name of all the territory between the rivers Severn and Wye; he also wrested the lordship of Brecknock from his kinsman Dyfnwall. Having been employed in a military capacity against the Scots and Picts, by King Arthur, he was, in consequence of his success, honoured with the knighthood of the round-table, and made Lord of 'Castell y dolorus,' (the dolorous tower,) a fortress for the confinement of state prisoners. (The name of 'Karados de la douloureuse tour' occurs in the printed Roman de Lancelot, Vol. I. f. 175, edit. Paris, 1520.) Caradoc is particularly noticed in the *Triades of the Isle of Britain*; where, in the true spirit of bardick eulogy, he is styled—'One of the three darlings of King Arthur's court'

—‘ One of the three battle-knights of Britain.’ His fleet stallion Lluagor is also recorded there as ‘ one of the three gift horses of Britain.’ Arthur is said to have himself composed an Englyn or stanza, wherein he emphatically names Caradoc, ‘ The Pillar of Wales.’ To crown all, he married *Tegan Burfron*, daughter of Pelmor, King of Gwinedd or North Wales; a princess recorded in the *Triades*, as ‘ one of the ‘ three chaste women of Britain: who possessed three rarities; of which herself only was reputed worthy; her ‘ mantle, her golden goblet, and her knife.’

Aneurin Gwawdrydd, styled the ‘ Monarch of the Bards,’ who flourished about the year 570, and was consequently contemporary with *Caradoc Freich-fras*, thus celebrates his prowess in his excellent poem entitled *Gododin*.

‘ Pan gryssiei *Garadawg* i gad
 ‘ Mab baedd coed, trychwn, trychiad,
 ‘ Tarw byddin yn nhrin gymmyniad,
 ‘ Ef llithiai wydd gwn oi angad,
 ‘ Ys fy nhyst Ewein fab Eulad,
 ‘ A Gwrien a Gwyn, a Gwriad.’

That is

‘ When *Garadawg* (*Caradoc*) rushed to the war,
 ‘ Son of the wild-boar, hewing down his maimed enemies,
 ‘ Like the bull in conflict of fight
 ‘ He wrested the spear from the hand of his adversary :
 ‘ As Ewein the son of Eulad can testify,
 ‘ And Gwrien, and Gwyn, and Gwriad.’

See Evans’s *Dissertatio de Bardis*, pages 68, 73, edit. 1764.

Merlin—Of Merlin it may not be necessary to say more than that two persons of this name are celebrated by Welch

writers. The one is *Myrddyn Emrys*, styled ‘one of the three chief magicians of Britain;’ who is the Ambrose Merlin of Geoffrey of Monmouth. The other is *Myrddyn ap Morfryn*, or *Myrddyn Wyllt*; in Latin Merlin Sylvester. They are recorded, together with Taliessin the poetical preceptor of Myrddyn (or Merdyn) ap Morfryn, in the following Triad:—

‘Tri phif fardd ynys Brydain.

‘Merddyn Emrys;

‘Merdyn mab Morfryn;

‘A Thaliesin pen Beirdd.’

That is—

‘The three principal Bards of the island of Britain.

‘Merlin Ambrose;

‘Merlin the son of Morfryn;

‘And Taliessin, the chief of Bards.’

NOTES TO

THE MULE WITHOUT A BRIDLE.

VERSE 3. ‘*And where proud Carduel’s battlements arise.*’—

Several cities besides Carduel are allotted to Arthur by the romance writers. The principal are Camelot, (which contained the round-table;) Carleon, (Caer-Lleon,) and Cardigan. Carduel is sometimes spelt Kerdenyle, or Kerdevyle; (See Warton, Vol. II. page 102;) and Cardoyle. (See *Mort d’Arthur*, part I. chap. 61; edit. 1634.)

Camelot is said, by Leland, Camden, and Stow; and by Selden, in his notes to Drayton’s *Poly-Olbion*; (songs 3d and 4th;) to have been at South Cadbury in Somersetshire. In the prologue to *Mort d’Arthur*, it is a town in Wales; but in the work itself (Part I. chap. 44) it is called Winchester. Geoffrey of Monmouth (Thompson’s translation, page 49.) calls Winchester Kaerguen.

Caer-Lleon was a name used indifferently for Carleon in Monmouthshire, and for Chester, sometimes called West-Chester. The one was called Caer-Lleon-ar-Wysg, from its situation on the river Usk: the other, Caer-Lleon-ar-Dyfrdwy, from its situation on the river Dee. Geoffrey of Monmouth’s Caerlisle is Caer-Lleon. (See note in Warton’s *History of English Poetry*; edit. 1775, Dissertation I. page 8.) His city of Legions (see Book IX. chap. 12.) is Caer-Lleon-ar-Wysg.

According to the British Triades, the principal courts or palaces of Arthur were as follows:—

- ‘ Tair prif lys Arthur.
- ‘ Caer-Lleon ar Wysg y Nghymru :
- ‘ Celliwig, yn Nyfnaint, neu y Nghernyw :
- ‘ A Phenrhyn Rhionedd, yn y gogledd.’

That is—

- ‘ The three chief palaces of Arthur.
- ‘ Carleon on the river Usk in Wales :
- ‘ Celliwig, in Devon, or Cornwall :
- ‘ And Penrhyn Rhionedd, in the north.’

The feast of Arthur at Carleon upon Usk, is honourably mentioned in the following Triad:—

- ‘ Tair gwlëdd anrhydeddus ynys Prydain.
- ‘ Gwlëdd Caswallon yn ôl gyrru Iwlcassar o’r ynys hon :
- ‘ Gwlëdd Emrys Wledig ar ôl gorchfygu y Saeson :
- ‘ A gwlëdd Arthur frenin ynghaer-Lleon-ar-Wysg.’

That is—

- ‘ The three honourable feasts of the isle of Britain.
- ‘ The feast of Caswallon, (Cassivellaunus,) after repelling
‘ Julius Cæsar from this isle :
- ‘ The feast of Aurelius Ambrosius, after he had conquered
‘ the Saxons :
- ‘ And the feast of King Arthur at Carleon upon Usk.’

Pseudo Gildas describes Carleon upon Usk as—

- ‘ Nobilis urbs, et amœna situ, quam labilis Osca
- ‘ Irrigat,

Verse 170. ‘ Bore high in air a mangled warriour’s head.’

This terrifick architectural ornament occurs also in the Romance of Sir Libius Disconius, or Li beau desconus.

(The fair unknown.) See Percy's Essay on the ancient Metrical Romances. (Reliques, Vol. III. edit. 1775.) A magnificent, and perhaps the only extant, specimen of capitals of this order, still encircles and adorns one of the publick buildings of the university of Oxford. The heads have been assigned by antiquaries to the paynim Cæsars, who, if their bodies were less disproportionate than that of Yllapantac in the Peruvian Tales, must consequently have been all giants of the first enormity.

Verse 280. '*Each adverse wheels to take his full career &c.*' This duel of the two knights is what was formerly called a *joust* or *tilt*, in which the combatants charged each other with lances, on horseback, and at full speed. A dexterous management of the shield, and especially a firm seat on the saddle, were necessary, to prevent being unhorsed by the shock of the adversary. If the horse was overthrown, his rider was not considered as vanquished, unless he had quitted his saddle-bows. These *saddle-bows* (*arçons*) rose to a considerable height before and behind, and were faced with metal. A representation is given in the head-piece to '*The Gentle Bachelor.*'

To ascertain by accurate inspection that the knights were not fastened to their saddles, was part of the duty of the heralds at tournaments.

Verse 322. '*She seats the courteous Gawaine by her side.*' It will appear from many passages in the Fabliaux, that the custom of reclining on beds or couches during meals, after the manner of the ancients, still subsisted. Chairs were probably not in general use. In Peres Ploughmane's Crede, the author, describing the luxury of the monks, mentions

‘ An halle for an hygh kyng an houshold to holden,

‘ *With brode bordes abouten, ybenched wel clene.*’

In the Geste of King Horne we find

‘ Horne sett hi abenche &c.’

In the chamber of a bishop of Winchester in 1266, forms or benches only are mentioned ‘ Et de i mensa cum tressellis in camera dom. Episcopi. et v *formis* in eadem camera.’ (Warton, Hist. Poetry, Vol I. page 40.

From this usage our court of King’s *Bench* has its name.

Verse 324. ‘ *Feeds from her food, the partner of her dish.*’— To eat on the same trencher or plate with any one was considered as the strongest mark of friendship. At great entertainments, the guests were placed two and two, and only one plate was allotted to each pair. In the romance of Perceforest it is said ‘ *There were eight hundred knights all seated at table, and yet there was not one who had not a dame or damsel at his plate.*’ In Lancelot du Lac, a lady whom her jealous husband had compelled to dine in the kitchen, complains ‘ *it is very long since any knight has eaten on the same plate with her.*’

Verse 346. ‘ *Calm he persists to claim the long-sought rein.*’— A more decisive proof will hardly be found than this ‘ *long-sought rein*’ affords, of the determination of a *Trouveur* to have an adventure at any rate. The enchanted mule seems to have no need of such furniture to guide him to the place of his destination ; and the amusement it can be supposed to supply to either of the freakish sisters, is at least not very obvious to a reader of the eighteenth century.

NOTES TO THE KNIGHT AND THE SWORD.

VERSE 8. ———— ‘*Sir Gawaine was his name.*’—

After the above spirited exordium, the author reproaches Chrestien de Troyes, whose pen had celebrated so many knights of the round-table, with the omission of Sir Gawaine. He informs us that he will endeavour to repair this injustice done to the reputation of his hero. He will at least sing of some of his exploits, since to recount all would be impossible. (For an account of Sir Gawaine, see notes to ‘The Mantle ‘made amiss.’)

Chrestien de Troyes flourished about the year 1168. It was usual among the poets of those times to distinguish themselves by the name of the place where they were born.

Chrestien was author of the metrical Romance ‘du Graal,’ and that of ‘Perceval le Galois;’ he also began ‘La Charette,’ containing the adventures of Lancelot du Lac. (Gordon de Perceval, Vol. II. page 228; yet consult Tyrwhitt’s Chaucer, Vol. IV. page 61. note.)

Verse 18. ‘*His spurs of well-wrought gold adorn’d his heel.*’— The golden or gilt spurs were the distinctive mark of a knight: those of a squire being always of silver. The original spurs were mere goads, fastened to the heel of the shoe, as appears from a seal of Alain Fergent, Duke of Bretany in 1084, and many other instances. Rowels were afterwards invented, and

the size of these was gradually increased to such a degree, that in the reign of Charles VII. they were nearly as broad as a man's hand, and the necks of the spurs were about six inches long. At the creation of a knight, the king or prince who conferred the order, generally buckled on the spurs with his own hands: and as this was the first ceremony of investiture, so the hacking off the spurs was the first act of degradation.

Verses 119, 120.

' Foremost their lord, with looks that joy express'd,

' Stood, prompt to greet and to assist his guest ;'—

On the arrival of a knight or other noble visitor, not only all the servants, but the mistress of the castle, with her daughters, went out to meet him: they held his stirrup to assist him to alight, pulled off his armour, and presented him with loose and costly robes, which were kept in the wardrobe of every castle for the use of strangers.

Verse 136. *' And in his hand his beauteous daughter bears.'—*

In the original there is a minute description of this beautiful damsel, and the author dwells with great complacency on her fair hair, and delicate complexion. This taste was continued for a long time; and to render the hair light was a great object of education. Even when wigs first came into fashion, they were all flaxen. Such was the colour of the Gauls, and of their German conquerors. It required some centuries to reconcile their eyes to the swarthy beauties of their Spanish and Italian neighbours.

Verses 241, 242.

' And down she lay as one to sleep resign'd,

' And gently by her side the knight reclin'd.'—

It will perhaps be thought by many readers, that the machinery

of the enchanted sword is not the most incredible part of this strange adventure, in which the *sage* Sir Gawaine is involved by the tyrannical hospitality of his entertainer ; and that no imaginable degree of caprice could possibly induce a father to weary the patience of his daughter by so many unavailing rehearsals of the bridal character. To suppose that such behaviour was consonant to general practice, and that female complaisance was habitually exposed to such severe trials, may appear still more incredible ; and yet we are assured by all travellers that such a practice actually prevails in many parts of America, and their testimony has been confirmed to the translator by a native of that country.

‘ *Bundling* (he says) is commonly practised in the interior parts of New England, among the labouring farmers. A young man sees a girl that strikes his fancy, pays a visit to her at her father’s, and proposes to *stay with her*, as it is called ; which if she accedes to, he remains there until the old folks retire to rest at their accustomed hour, leaving the young couple together. As there are commonly beds in every room, they usually throw off their upper garments and lie down, and frequently remain together till morning, and so little is thought of it, that he often stays to breakfast with the family. If he repeats his visit, he is considered as her lover, and it commonly ends in matrimony. If a *gentleman* goes into the country, the girls are not easily persuaded to *bundle* with him, because they know he will not marry them, in case an accident should happen, which is not very unlikely, in such a critical situation : whereas they are tolerably secure with persons of their own rank, because the laws inflict on the defaulter so heavy a penalty as few are able to

‘ pay, and he must either marry her or fly the country. Besides, if any man among them should desert a girl in this situation, he would expose himself to universal contempt and detestation.’

Verse 342. ‘ *The wide hall echoing with the minstrels’ lay* :— The troops of minstrels and wandering musicians have been already noticed. These extraordinary men, whose indecent and profligate morals excited the contempt even of their contemporaries, must still raise our surprise, by the variety and extent of their talents. They sung, played on various instruments, were versed in musical composition ; they were expected to remember all the songs, tales, and even romances of the time ; and some of them, as Rutebeuf and Baudouin de Condé, were tolerable poets.

The instruments mentioned in this Fabliau, are the *viele*, the flute, the pipe, the harp, and the *rote*. It appears from the miniatures accompanying the old manuscripts, that the *viele* was not the instrument now called by that name, but a fiddle, at least it had nearly the same shape, and was played on with a bow. From an expression in the letters of Boniface archbishop of Mentz, (‘*Citharizare in Citharâ quam nos ap- pellamus Rottæ,*’) it seems that the *rote* was some species of harp. It occurs in Chaucer and all our early poets. The musick of the earlier times was written with square notes ranged on four lines, the fifth was not introduced till late in the reign of St. Louis.

Verse 348. ‘ *With tables or with chess beguile the day* :— The game of *tables* appears to have resembled either trictrack or backgammon.

Chess, which, from immemorial antiquity, has been a

favourite game in Asia, was either introduced into Europe by the Saracens of Spain, or learned from the Greeks or Turks by the pilgrims in the crusades. Both *chess* and *tables* are mentioned by Robert of Gloucester in describing King Arthur's coronation. 'Wyth pleyng at tables, other atte chekere.' (Warton's English Poetry, Vol. I. p. 50.) How familiar the language of chess must have been in Lydgate's time, may be inferred from the following passage in his prologue to the Fall of Princes.—

‘ And to princes, for they be not stable,
 ‘ Fortune full oft, for al theyr great estate,
 ‘ Unwarely changeth, and saith to them *checkmate*.’

Verse 472. ‘ *And now, with lance in rest, the foe appear’d.*’—

At the time this Fabliau was written, the lance-rest was probably nothing more than the *arçon* or bow of the saddle, against which the knight, in charging, rested the butt-end of his lance. Afterwards, on the introduction of *plate-armour*, hooks, and also moveable iron brackets, fixed to the right side of the cuirass, were employed for the purpose of supporting the lance: an expedient of which the construction of mail-armour would not admit.

NOTES TO

THE VALE OF FALSE LOVERS.

VERSE I. ‘*The stout Sir Launcelot*’———

Sir Launcelot of the Lake (Lancelot du Lac) is represented in the prose French Romance (3 volumes in folio, black letter, Paris, A. D. 1520) which bears his name, as the son of King Ban of Benoit, (one of Arthur’s vassals in Gaul,) and his queen Helaine, a lady of the lineage of David. King Ban’s territory being over-run by Claudas King ‘*de la terre deserte,*’ he departs with his royal consort and their infant son Launcelot, to solicit succours from Arthur. Scarcely have they quitted their castle of Tribble, when their treacherous seneschal surrenders it to the enemy. King Ban, looking back, sees his fortress in flames, and dies with grief. His queen, frantick at her loss, for a while forgets her infant. Recollecting herself at length, she discovers him by the side of a lake, in the arms of an unknown damsel, ‘*qui le tient tout nud en son geron, et l’estrainst et serre moult doucement entre ses deux māmelles, et lui baise souvent les yeulx et la bouche.*’ The queen entreats her to restore the child: but the lady, seeing her approach nearer, instantly plunges with him into the lake. Helaine, overwhelmed with affliction, repairs to the ‘*abbaye de monstier royal:*’ ‘*illecques furent trenchees et coupees les belles tresches de la royne:*’ and she turns nun.’ Launcelot, however, is instructed, under the lady of the lake, in all knightly accomplishments: Queen Helaine is informed of his well-being by a ‘*preud-*

‘*homme* :’ and his fame descends to posterity in three volumes in folio. The adventure of *the Vale of false Lovers* will be found in Vol. I. *fueillet* 193.

Sir Launcelot was among the bravest and comeliest of all the knights of the Round Table, and was the successful lover of Guenever, the consort of his sovereign. His fidelity to his mistress is much celebrated in romance, and indeed it seems to have been exposed to frequent and difficult trials. On one of these occasions, a lady having paid him a visit at night, and assuring him that the queen could not possibly be informed of his trespass, he answered, ‘ Though she should never know it, my heart, which is constantly near her, could not be ignorant.’ This reply is in the genuine spirit of chivalry. On the French playing-cards, one of the four *knaves* (or *varlets* or *valets*, for these appellations were nearly, if not entirely, equivalent,) bears the name of Launcelot : a proof of the estimation in which that worthy was held at the time when cards were invented. His funeral eulogy, as it is given in the English *Mort d’Arthur*, (edit. 1634,) exhibits a compendium of knightly perfection. ‘ And now I dare say (said Sir Bors,) that, Sir Launcelot, there thou liest, thou were never matched of none earthly knight’s hands. And thou were the curtiest knight that ever beare shield. And thou were the truest friend to thy lover that ever bestrood horse, and thou were the truest lover, of a sinful man, that ever loved woman. And thou were the kindest man that ever strooke with sword. And thou were the goodliest person that ever came among presse of knights. And thou were the meekest man, and the gentlest, that ever eate in hall among ladies. And thou were the sternest knight to thy mortal foe that ever put speare in the rest.’

Verse 5. '*Far roam'd the warriour, captive knights he freed &c.*' To deliver knights, succour dames, exterminate robbers, and abolish evil customs, was the duty of every knight errant, and such an obligation would itself be a sufficient proof of the hideous anarchy that prevailed during the feudal ages, if history had not recorded its excesses. The smiles now excited by the adventures of Don Quixote are a strong eulogium on the benefits of a regular government.

Verse 184. '*Each day in solemn Mass the assembled band
' might join.'*—

It is not entirely without surprise that we see a chapel and mass on this occasion, but the writers of romance are full of such incongruities. A hero, after passing the night with his mistress, never fails to hear mass the next morning. Even Merlin, engendered by a demon, in consequence of a solemn council held by the infernal spirits to destroy the *work of redemption*, is often employed as a zealous catholic in promoting by his enchantments the advancement of Christianity, and in raising up future defenders of the holy faith. It is true that the means he employs are more analogous to his nature, as the heroes to whose birth he is accessory are generally illegitimate, and in the celebrated instance of Arthur himself the fruit of adultery.

Verses 193, 194.

'*He on his way still forward press'd outright,*

'*Nor turn'd aside for danger or delight.'*—

This couplet the translator has borrowed, with slight variation, from Cowley's *Davideis*, Book IV. line 360.

NOTES TO THE LAY OF SIR LANVAL.

MR. WARTON, in his History of English Poetry, mentions *Launval* or *Lanval* as the title of one of the French metrical tales in the British Museum, and notices a translation of it by Thomas Chestre in the reign of Henry the VI. under the name of Sir *Launfale*. At the conclusion of most of these tales it is said that these *Lais* were originally written by the poets of Bretany. They were translated into French by Marie, a poetess who also translated King Alfred's Anglo-Saxon version of *Æsop*. She is not mentioned in Le Grand's catalogue, though he has modernized and published her *Fables*. That she had written *Lays* he was therefore apparently ignorant, in common with the other French antiquaries. (Consult Tyrwhitt's Introd. to Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, note 24. page 164, edit. 1775.) Yet he has published a 'Lai de Gugemer;' and a Lay of Guigemar is quoted as Mademoiselle Marie's by Tyrwhitt, which probably is in substance the same. (Compare the quotation from Gugemer in Le Grand, note 4 to Lai de Lanval, with Tyrwhitt's, from MS. Harl. 978, fol. 146, in his notes on *Canterbury Tales*, verse 11021.)

The extracts from Chestre's translation published by Mr. Warton, differ in some particulars from the tale here given; but, as has already been observed, it seldom happens that any two manuscripts of a Fabliau are found to tell the story exactly in the same way.

Verse 39. ‘*With costliest silk superbly dight,*’—

Before the 6th century, all the silk used by Europeans had been brought to them by the *Seres*, the ancestors of the present Boukharians, from whence it derived its Latin name of *Serica*. In 551 the silk-worm was brought by two monks to Constantinople; but the manufacture of silk was confined to the Greek empire till the year 1130, when Roger King of Sicily returning from a crusade collected some manufacturers from Athens and Corinth, and established them at Palermo; from whence the trade was gradually disseminated over Italy. In the 13th century Bruges was the principal mart for this commodity. The varieties of silk stuffs known at this time were velvet, satin, (which was called *samit* or *samyte*,) and taffety, (called *cendal* or *sandal*,) all of which were occasionally stitched with gold and silver.

Verse 40. ‘*A gay pavilion &c.*’—

In the English Lay of Syr Launfal (as quoted by Warton in his Dissertation on the *Gesta Romanorum*, page 35) the picture of the lady in the pavilion is given with a good deal of brilliancy.

‘ In the pavyloun he found a bed of prys,
 ‘ Yheled with purpure bys
 ‘ That semyly was of syzte;
 ‘ Withinne lay that lady gente
 ‘ That after Syr Launfal hadde sente,
 ‘ That lefsom beamed bryzt.

‘ For hete her clothes doun she dede,
 ‘ Almost to her gerdylstede;
 ‘ Then lay she uncovert :

‘ Sche was as whyt as lylye in Maye,
 ‘ Or snowe that snoweth yn wyntery’s daye ;
 ‘ He seygh nevir non so pert.

‘ The rede rose whan sche is newe,
 ‘ Azens herrode nes nauzt of hewe ;
 ‘ Y dar say yn sert ;
 ‘ Her hare schon as gold wyre,

.

Verses 51, 52.—

‘ *A crimson pall of Alexandria’s dye,*
 ‘ *With snowy ermine lin’d,*—————

In the original it is called *pourpre* (*purple*,) by which the poets of the middle ages, as well as the ancients, expressed all the shades of red, from scarlet to the deepest crimson and violet. It is lined with ermine, though the scene of the Fabliau is laid in the summer season ; and this was the fashion in all the north of Europe. Such a dress would be intolerable in a warm climate, and therefore mantles of ermine are very unusual in the heraldry of Spain, Portugal, and Italy. The ermine was so called from Armenia, then written *Herminia*, from whence it was brought.

Verse 76. ‘ *The two fair damsels*’—————

It has been already observed in the Preface, that the attendants on the great were always chosen from the young nobility of both sexes. In the original they are called *pucelles* ; *maids* ; or (as we should now say) *maids of honour*.

Verse 125 to 132. ‘ *Now ransom’d thralls &c.*’—

Though the achievement of almost every adventure in romance terminates in the liberation of captives, the victims of

oppression were so numerous in those times of anarchy, that the payment of their ransomes must have afforded a wide field to the liberality of the opulent. Distressed knights, holy pilgrims, and crusaders, were natural objects of munificence in an age of chivalry and devotion. But the authors of the *Fabliaux* very wisely consider generosity to minstrels as among the first of royal and knightly virtues. Among the presents most usually conferred on them were rich clothes ; a custom said to be borrowed from the Arabians, in imitation of Mahomet, who gave his mantle to the poet Caab.

Verse 249. '*All pledg'd their fiefs*'———

From all the circumstances of this trial, it seems that when the *Fabliau* was written, the forms of French and English criminal jurisprudence were almost exactly similar. On the subject of pledges or securities we have a curious anecdote in the *Life of Saint Louis*. On his return from Egypt to France, being in danger of shipwreck, his queen vowed to St. Nicholas a vessel of silver, and, as a farther security to the saint, insisted that Joinville should become her *pledge* for the execution of the promise.

Verse 286. '*It were a doom of shame and cruelty.*'—

The punishment of death seems, indeed, rather disproportioned to the offence, but, in the times of chivalry, any insult offered to a woman was considered as a most heinous crime. When a tournament was proclaimed, the knights who intended to fight were obliged to suspend their shields during several preceding days in some publick place, and the judges of the lists had orders to conduct all ladies thither, in order that if any of them had cause to complain of a knight, she might touch his shield, and thereby indicate her displeasure. The accused

knight was then examined by the judge, and, if found guilty, was either excluded the lists altogether, or else his offence being made known to the other combatants, he was attacked by the whole body, and beaten by them till he publicly implored the pardon of the ladies.

Verse 334. '*Too bright for mixture of earth's mortal mould.*'
See Milton's *Comus*, line 244.—

'Can any mortal mixture of earth's mould

'Breathe such divine enchanting ravishment?'

Verse 335. '*The gridelin pall that o'er her shoulders flow'd*'
The expression here rendered *gridelin*, is *pourpre grise* (gray crimson). The old French writers speak also of *pourpre* and *écarlate blanches* (white crimson); of *pourpre sanguine* (sanguine crimson); and, in the *Fabliau de Gautier d'Aupais*, mention is made of '*un vert mantel porprine*' (a mantle of green crimson). Hence M. Le Grand conjectures that the crimson dye being, from its costliness, used only on cloths of the finest manufacture, the term *crimson* came at length to signify not the *colour*, but the *texture*, of the stuff. Were it allowable to attribute to the weavers of the middle ages the art now common amongst us, of making what are usually called *shot silks*, (or silks of two colours predominating interchangeably as in the neck of the drake or pigeon,) the contradictory compounds above given (*white crimson*, *green crimson*, &c.) would be easily accounted for.

Verse 336. '*Halfvail'd her snow-white courser as she rode,*'—
A white horse was usually a sign of royalty. When Edward the Black Prince conducted his prisoner King John to London, he assigned a white horse to the captive monarch, and was himself mounted on a small palfrey. At the entry of the Em-

peror Charles IV. into Paris, the king (Charles V.) rode a white horse, and mounted the emperor on a black one, lest, by a contrary conduct, he should seem to acknowledge his own inferiority.

Verses 337, 338.

'On her fair hand a sparrow-hawk was plac'd,

'Her steed's sure steps a following greyhound trac'd;'—

A falcon and a dog are the constant symbols of high rank, and for this reason the barons and their ladies seldom appeared in publick without their hawks and greyhounds. The treasurer of the church of Auxerre had the privilege of assisting at divine service with a hawk on his fist, and the Lord of Sassai enjoyed the distinction of perching his falcon on the edge of the altar. The portraits of illustrious persons, both in painting and tapestry, are often ornamented with hounds placed at their feet and hawks on their fists, and their tombstones are frequently embellished in the same manner. This distinction is common to both sexes. Indeed the ladies in those ages enjoyed privileges and held offices which at present appear extraordinary. The hereditary sheriffdom of Westmoreland was in a female.

Verse 374. *'High on the portal's marble steps he stood.'*—

These steps, which occur in all the romances, were what we should now call *horse-blocks*: they were frequently placed on the roads, and in the forests, and were almost numberless in the towns. Many of them still remain in Paris, where they were used by the magistrates in order to mount their mules on which they rode to the courts of justice. On these blocks, or on the tree which was generally planted near them, were usually suspended the shields of those knights who wished to

challenge all comers to feats of arms. They were also sometimes used as a place of judgment, and a *rostrum*; on which the barons took their seats when they determined the differences between their vassals, and from whence the publick criers made proclamations to the people.

Verse 378. ‘*To the fair isle of fertile Avalon.*’—

This spot, which seems to be the Elysium of the Armorican fablers, is generally supposed to be Glastonbury in Somersetshire. In the British or Welch tongue it is called Ynys Afalon, the Isle of Apples; also Ynys Gwydrin, the Glass Island; the title of *island* being given it from its being encompassed by water and marshes: or, to use Selden’s words, (notes to Poly-Olbion, song 3d.) ‘Selwood sends forth Bry, which after a winding course from Bruton (so called of the river,) through part of Sedgemore, and Andremore, comes to Glastonbury, and almost *inises* it; thence to Gedney-moore, and out of Brent marsh into Severne.’ The present appellation, Glastonbury, perhaps retains a translated trace of its former name Ynys Gwydrin, or Wydrin, *Glass Island*; and the British *Ynys Gwydrin* is possibly a corruption of *insula vitrea*. Should we incline to the opinion of those who deduce its name from *glastum*, *woad*, which they say grew spontaneously thereabouts, we must remember that, both for *woad* and *glass*, the Latin word is *vitrum*.

An account of the foundation of its abbey may be seen in Grose’s Antiquities, where the following relation is given of the discovery of Arthur’s sepulchre.—‘It is said King Henry II. on the faith of several ancient songs recording his (King Arthur’s) being buried in this place, ordered search to be made; and, at about seven feet under ground, a kind of

‘ tombstone was found, with a rude leaden cross fixed on it, on
 ‘ which was a Latin inscription in barbarous Gothick cha-
 ‘ racters, the English of which is,—‘ Here lies buried the fa-
 ‘ mous King Arthur, in the isle of Avalonia.’ About nine
 ‘ feet below this monumental stone was found a coffin, hol-
 ‘ lowed out of the solid oak, containing the bones of a human
 ‘ body, supposed to be that of King Arthur: these were, by
 ‘ the care of the abbot, translated into the church, and covered
 ‘ with a magnificent monument.’ (Refer to note on ‘ Mantle
 ‘ made amiss,’ verse 2.)

In the Triades, the isle of Avalon is celebrated as having
 ‘ one of the three perpetual choirs of Britain.’—

‘ Tri dyfal gyfangan ynys Prydain.
 ‘ Un oedd yn ynys Afallach :
 ‘ Yr ail y’nghaer Caradawc :
 ‘ Ar trydydd ym Mangor Is y coed.’

That is—

‘ The three perpetual choirs of the island of Britain.
 ‘ One was in the isle of Avalon :
 ‘ The second was at *Caer Caradoc* : (*Salisbury* :)
 ‘ And the third at *Bangor Iscoed*.’

Archbishop Usher, in his *Antiquities of the British Churches*,
 page 273, quotes the following account of the isle of Avalon
 from Giraldus:—‘ *Glastonia dicta est insula, quoniam marisco*
 ‘ *profundo undique est clausa : quæ mediamnis magis propriè*
 ‘ *diceretur, quasi mediis scilicet amnibus sita ; sicut melius*
 ‘ *insulæ dicuntur, quæ in salo, hoc est in mari, sitæ, nascuntur.*
 ‘ *Avalonia vero dicta est, vel ab *aval*, Britannico verbo quod*
 ‘ *pomum sonat, quia locus ille pomis et pomariis abundare*
 ‘ *solet ; vel ab Avalone quodam, territorii illius quodam*

‘dominatore. Item solet antiquitus locus ille Britannicè dici
 ‘*Ynys Gwydrin*, hoc est, insula vitrea, propter amnem scilicet,
 ‘quasi vitrei coloris, in marisco circumfluentem: et ob hoc
 ‘dicta est postmodum a Saxonibus terram occupantibus, lin-
 ‘guâ eorum, Glastonia; *glas* enim Anglicè vel Saxonice
 ‘vitrum sonat.’ (Girald. in specul. ecclesiastic. distinct. 2.
 cap. 9.)

The same prelate gives likewise (Brit. Eccl. Antiq. folio, Londini, 1637, page 273.) from an ancient writer, whom he calls ‘Britannicæ historiæ Metaphrastes,’ and ‘Pseudo-Gildas,’ a description in Latin hexameters, of this British elysium; which the writer represents as one of the happy islands—the ‘arva, beata arva, divites et insulas’—of Horace; (Epod. ode 16.) introducing the cure of Arthur, and his residence with the fairy Morgain. He assumes to himself that privilege which all poets are entitled to, ‘quidlibet audendi,’ by converting the marshes of Somersetshire into the main ocean; and sings as follows:—

- ‘Cingitur oceano memorabilis insula, nullis
- ‘Desolata bonis: non fur, nec prædo, nec hostis
- ‘Insidiatur ibi: nec vis, nec bruma, nec æstas,
- ‘Immoderata furit. Pax et concordia, pubes
- ‘Ver manet æternum. Nec flos, nec lilia desunt,
- ‘Nec rosa, nec violæ: flores et poma sub unâ
- ‘Fronde gerit pomus. Habitant sine labe cruoris
- ‘Semper ibi juvenes cum virgine: nulla senectus,
- ‘Nulla vis morbi, nullus dolor; omnia plena
- ‘Lætitiæ; nihil hic proprium, communia quæque.
- ‘Regia virgo locis et rebus præsidet istis,
- ‘Virginibus stipata suis, pulcherrima pulchris;

- ‘ Nympha decens vultu, generosis patribus orta,
‘ Consilio pollens, medicinæ nobilis arte.
‘ At simul Arthurus regni diadema reliquit,
‘ Substituitque sibi regem, se transtulit illic ;
‘ Anno quingeno quadragenoque secundo
‘ Post incarnatum sine patris semine natum.
‘ Immodicè læsus, Arthurus tendit ad aulam
‘ Regis Avallonis ; ubi virgo regia vulnus
‘ Illius tractans, sanati membra reservat
‘ Ipsa sibi : vivuntque simul ; si credere fas est.’

Translation.—

By the main ocean's wave encompass'd, stands
A memorable isle, fill'd with all good :
No thief, no spoiler there, no wily foe
With stratagem of wasteful war ; no rage
Of heat intemperate, or of winter's cold ;
But spring, full blown, with peace and concord reigns :
Prime bliss of heart and season, fittest join'd !
Flowers fail not there ; the lily and the rose,
With many a knot of fragrant violets bound ;
And, loftier, clustering down the bended boughs,
Blossom with fruit combin'd, rich apples hang.
Beneath such mantling shades for ever dwell
In virgin innocence and honour pure,
Damsels and youths, from age and sickness free,
And ignorant of wo, and fraught with joy,
In choice community of all things best.

O'er these, and o'er the welfare of this land,
Girt with her maidens, fairest among fair,
Reigns a bright virgin sprung from generous sires,

In counsel strong, and skill'd in med'cine's lore.
Of her, (Britannia's diadem consign'd
To other brow,) for his deep wound and wide
Great Arthur sought relief: hither he sped,
(Nigh two and forty and five hundred years
Since came the incarnate Son to save mankind,)
And in Avallon's princely hall repos'd.
His wound the royal damsel search'd; she heal'd;
And in this isle still holds him to herself
In sweet society,—so fame say true!

NOTES TO

THE LAY OF SIR GRUÉLAN.

THE groundwork of this Lay is the same with that of Sir Lanval ; but the incidents are so varied, as, perhaps, to obviate any objection to publishing both, arising from similarity. At all events they may be considered and compared as examples of the skill of the French fablers in the art of imitation. The scene is here laid in Bretany, under a king and queen whose names are not mentioned.

Verse 127. *‘ His hosts, no matter where, from home were gone.’* The kings and great barons furnished only the officers, &c. of their household with apartments in their castles ; except when court-plenary was held. During the remainder of the year, those who were attached to their service, or who had any business to transact with them, provided themselves with accommodations of this sort.

On reviewing so cumbrous a body of notes, with a glossary of uncouth words, appended to a volume of modern rhymes ; the translator cannot but feel somewhat diffident of the publick reception. ‘ Yet,’ (to adopt the words of Selden in his prefatory discourse to the notes in Drayton’s Poly-Olbion,) ‘ for antique termes, so much as that way I offend is warranted by example of such, of whom to endeavor imitation allowes me

‘ more than the bare title of blameless.’ ‘ Of the notes, permit
‘ mee thus much :—What the verse oft, with allusion, as sup-
‘ posing a full-knowing reader, lets slip ; or in winding steps
‘ of personating fictions (as some times,) so infolds, that sud-
‘ daine conceipt cannot abstract a forme of the clothed truth :
‘ I have, as I might, illustrated. Brevity and plainenes (as the
‘ one endur’d the other) I have joyned ; purposely avoyding
‘ frequent commixture of different language ; and, whensoever
‘ it happens, the page, (specially for gentlewomen’s sake,)
‘ summarily interprets it, except where interpretation aides
‘ not.’

‘ Ingenuous readers, to you I wish your best desires.’ ‘ To
‘ gentlewomen and their loves is consecrated, all the wooing
‘ language, allusions to love-passions, and sweet embracements
‘ feigned by the muse ’mongst hills and rivers : whatsoever
‘ tastes of description, battell, story, abstruse antiquity, and
‘ law of the kingdome ; to the more severe reader. To the
‘ one, be contenting enjoyments of their auspicious desires :
‘ to the other, happy attendance of their chosen muses.’

GLOSSARY.

A.

A. The letter A is frequently used in the old past tense of verbs, where O or U is employed at present : as *bare* for *bore*, *brake* for *broke*, *clave* for *clove*, *draue* for *drove*, *wan* for *won*, *sang* for *sung*, *sank* for *sunk*.

ADVISEMENT. Counsel ; circumspection.

ALBE. }
ALBEIT. } Although ; notwithstanding.

ALGATES. (Apparently to be traced thus :—ALGATES ; AL-GUISE ; ALWISE ; ALWAYS : that is, let the *guise* or *manner* be what it may.) At any rate ; by all means ; in any way.

AL-TO. }
ALL-TO. } Entirely ; completely.

AMICE. (Amictus, Latin.) Properly, the first or undermost part of a priest's habit ; but used here more loosely. (See note to ' the Canonesses and Gray Nuns,' on the word.)

TO APPAY. (appayer, old French) To content ; to satisfy.

ASTONIED. Astonished.

ASSAY. Trial by danger or distress.

TO ASSAY. To make trial of.

TO A VISE. }
TO A VIZE. } To consider.

AYE. }
For AYE. } For ever.

B.

BAIRN. A child.

BELDAM. (Belle dame, French.) An old woman.

BESTED. } Accommodated ; treated.

ILL BESTED. } Ill accommodated.

- TO BEWRAY.** To discover ; to divulge.
- BLAND.** Mild ; gentle.
- BONNIBELL.** (*Bonne et belle*, good and fair, French.) An appellation for a woman.
- BOON.** *Substantive.* A gift ; a grant.
- BOON.** *Adjective.* Gay ; lively.
- BOOT.** Profit ; advantage.
- BOOTLESS.** Useless ; unprofitable.
- BOUNTIHEAD.** Goodness ; virtue.
- BOURN.** A bound ; a limit.
- BOWER.** An arbour ; any bowed or arched room ; a chamber, as opposed to a hall ; a dwelling in general.
- BRAVE.** Magnificent ; noble.
- BRAVERY.** Splendour ; show ; magnificence.
- BRUIT.** (*Bruit*, French.) Rumour ; report.
- BRUITED.** Rumoured.
- BUSKETS.** (*Bosquet*, French.) Thickets.
- BYSANT.** A coin, probably named from Byzantium. (See note to ' the Order of Knighthood, verse 36.)

C.

- CARLE.** A mean, rude, brutal man ; a churl.
- CASQUE.** (*Casque*, French.) A helmet.
- TO CAST.** To contrive ; to turn the thoughts.
- CASTELLAIN.** The lord or governor of a castle.
- CAYTIVE.** Captive, with implication of something base and disgraceful.
- CHARILY.** Warily ; with scrupulous nicety.
- CHEER.** Temper of mind ; air of the countenance.
- CIRCLET.** A little circle. (See note to Aucassin and Nicolette, verse 243.)
- CLEPED.** Called.
- CLERK.** An ecclesiastick. A man of letters.
- TO CLIP.** To embrace, by throwing the arms round.

TO CON. To know.

CONNING. }
CUNNING. } Knowing; skilful.

CONTRARIOUS. Opposite; repugnant the one to the other.

CRAVEN. Cowardly; base.

CRISPED. Curled.

CRONE. An old woman. (It implies slight or contempt.)

D.

DEFTLY, Dexterously; in a skilful manner.

DESPITEOUS. Malicious; furious.

TO DIGHT. To put on; to dress; to adorn.

DISADVENTUROUS. Unprosperous.

DISCOMFITURE. Defeat; overthrow; ruin.

DISPARAGEMENT. Injurious comparison or union with something of inferior excellence.

DISTRAUGHT. Distracted.

DITTIED. Sung; adapted to musick.

TO DO. To make; to cause. (*Did to die, is caused to die, or put to death.*)

DOLE. (From *to deal*.) The act of distribution or dealing. Any thing dealt out or distributed.

DOLE. (From *dolor*, Latin.) Grief; misery.

DOUBTLESS. *Adjective*. Free from doubt.

DOUGHTY. Brave; noble; illustrious; eminent.

DRAPET. Cloth, as for a table.

TO DUB. To make a man a knight by a stroke of a sword. *At dubban, or Addubba*, Islandick, signifies *to strike*. Hence *Addubba till riddara*, Islandick; dubban zo pibepe, Saxon; *to dub a knight*. (See note to 'the Order of Knighthood,' verse 112.)

DUMP. Melancholy; sadness.

E.

TO EMBAY. To bathe.

TO ENTHRALL. To enslave.

EREWHILE. A little while ago.

ERST. Formerly ; long ago ; before.

TO ESCHEW. To flee from ; to shun.

F.

FAITOUR. (Faitard, French.) A lazy idle fellow.

TO FARE. To go ; to travel.—To be in any state, good or bad.—To eat.

FAY. (Fée, French.) A fairy.

FEALTY. Duty due to a superiour lord.

FIDUCIAL. Undoubting ; with confident reliance on.

TO FLOUT. To mock ; to practise mockery.

FORESPENT. Spent before. Utterly spent.

G.

TO GAINSAY. To contradict ; to oppose.

GALLOW-TREE. The tree of execution ; the gallows.

GAMBESON. A stuffed doublet, worn under armour. (See note to 'Aucassin and Nicolette,' verse 214.)

GARNITURE. Furniture ; ornament.

GEAR. The furniture of a rustick's horse.

GIBES. Sneers ; taunts.

GIGLET. A wanton girl.

GRAMERCY. (Grand merci, French.) Great thanks ; I thank you.

GOVERNANCE. Behaviour.

GREE. (Grê, French.) Pleasure ; satisfaction.

GRIDELIN. A mixed or changeable colour of *white* and *red*—*grizelin*—see Johnson and Bailey. Rather, it should seem, of *white* and *blue*; since apparently from the French *gris-de-lin*, a colour named from the blossom of flax, which is a fine blue. Dryden ('Flower and leaf,') calls it, 'the 'bloomy gridelin.' (Refer to note on 'Lay of Sir Lanval,' verse 335.)

GRIDING. Cutting.

GUERDON. Reward.

GUISE. Manner ; cast of behaviour ; external appearance.

H.

HAP. Chance ; fortune.

HARBOURAGE. (Herbergage, old French.) Lodging.

HARDIHOOD. }
HARDIMENT. } Courage ; stoutness ; bravery.

HAUBERK. A complete suit of mail-armour. (See note to 'Aucassin and Nicolette,' verse 214.)

HENT. (*past tense of to HEND.*) Seized ; laid hold on.

HESTS. Commands ; injunctions.

TO HIE. To hasten ; to go in haste.

HOWBE. }
HOWBEIT. } Nevertheless ; notwithstanding ; yet ; how-ever.

I.

JOUST. A duel, or a mock fight, with lances, on horseback.

(See note to 'the Mule without a Bridle,' verse 280.)

K.

TO KEN. To see at a distance ; to descry.

KIRTLE. A sort of jacket.

L.

TO LACK. To want ; to be in want ; to be wanting.

LAIRE. Uncultivated ground. Harbour of wild beasts, or of deer.

LAPT. Involved in any thing.

LAVER. A washing vessel.

LEMAN. (L'amant and l'amante, French ; or Leofman, Saxon.) A mistress.

LEWD. Ignorant ; unlike one of gentle blood ; dissolute ; wanton.

LIBBARD. A leopard.

LIEF. *Adjective.* Dear ; beloved.—*Adverb.* Willingly.

LIEFER. More willingly ; rather.

LIEGE LORD. A sovereign or lord to whom others were bound by feudal tenure.

LIEGEMAN. One bound by feudal tenure to another ; a subject.

LIVRE. Originally a French silver coin of the weight of one pound, or 20 sols, (solidi,) or 12 ounces. The coin no longer exists : the value now implied by the term is about ten-pence halfpenny.

LORDINGS. Sirs, masters.

LORE. Lesson ; doctrine ; instruction.

LOSELL. A worthless abandoned fellow.

LOVE-LORN. Forsaken of one's love.

To LOU. To bend ; to pay obeisance.

LUSTY. Stout ; vigorous ; healthy.

To LUX. To put out of joint.

M.

MACE. A kind of short club. (See note to ' Gentle Bachelor,' verse 11.)

MALE. A budget or portmanteau. (A word now confined to the post-office, and spelt *MAIL*.)

MARISH. A marsh ; a morass.

MARK. A sum of thirteen shillings and four-pence. (See note to ' Aucassin and Nicolette,' verse 715.)

MARRY. } A familiar asseveration ; by the name (it
AY MARRY. } seems) of the Virgin Mary.

MAUGRE. (Malgré, French.) In spite of ; notwithstanding.

MICKLE. Much ; great.

MOOD. Temper of mind ; state of mind as affected by any passion.

N.

NASAL. The nose-piece of a helmet. (See note to ' Aucassin and Nicolette,' verse 243.)

NAUGHT. Bad ; worthless.

NOUGHT. Nothing ; in no degree.

O.

OR EVER. }
OR E'ER. } Before ever.

P.

PARAGON. A model ; a pattern. It implies supreme excellence.

PARLOUS. Keen ; waggish.

TO PART. (*Partir*, French.) To go away ; to set out.

PAYNIM. Pagan, idolatrous. (See note to 'the Order of Knighthood,' verse 5.)

PEERLESS. Unequalled.

PERLOUS. Perilous.

PLATE AND MAIL. (See note to 'Aucassin and Nicolette,' verse 214.)

PLEACHED. Bent ; interwove .

PLENAR. Full. (See note to 'Mantle made amiss,' verse 12.)

PREST. (*Prêt*, French.) Ready ; not dilatory.

PROMISE. Expectation excited in others by the general appearance of any one.

PROWEST. (*superlative of PROW.*) Most valiant.

PURFLED. Embroidered.

Q.

TO QUAIL. To lose spirit ; to sink in dejection.

QUARRY. Game flown at by a hawk ; hence, any thing chased.

QUEST. Search ; act of seeking.

R.

RAUGHT. *Old past tense and part. passive of* TO REACH.

TO READ. To discover by characters or marks. To learn by observation.

RECKLESS. Careless ; heedless.

TO RECURE. To recover from sickness or sadness.

REST. A hook, or a moveable iron bracket, to support the lance when directed against an adversary. (See note to 'the Knight and the Sword,' verse 472.)

RIFE. Prevalent ; abounding.

RUTH. Pity.

RUTHLESS. Void of pity.

S.

SANS. (French.) Without.

SCANT. *Adjective.* Scanty.—*Adverb.* Scarcely.

TO SCANT. To limit; to straiten.

SEEMLY. Decent; becoming; proper.

SELL. (Selle, French.) A saddle.

SENESCHAL. Superintendant of feasts. (See notes to 'the
Mantle made amiss,' verses 132 and 203.)

SHEEN. Shining; bright.

SHENT. *Past tense of* to SHEND, which signifies to disgrace;
to degrade; to blame; to reproach.

SINGULTS. Sighs.

SLEIGHT. An artful trick; a cunning artifice.

SOOTH. Truth.

SOOTHLY. Truly.

SPOUSAL. Marriage.

SPRIGT. Spirit.

STALE. *Substantive.* Any thing offered as an allurement.

STEDFAST. Firm; fixed.

STRAIGHT
STRAIGHTWAYS. } Immediately.

STRAIT. *Substantive.* Distress; difficulty.

STRAIT. *Adjective.* Narrow; close; rigorous.

STRIDULOUS. Making a small creaking noise.

T.

TEEN. Sorrow; grief.

THRALL. One who is in the power of another. A slave.

THRIFTLESS. Extravagant.

TORTIOUS. (From Tort, French.) Injurious.

TOURNAMENT. } A military sport, or mock battle, where

TOURNEY. } many combatants are engaged.

TO TRICK. To dress; to decorate.

TROUVEURS. (From *Trouver*, to invent ; French.) Poets of the North of France. (See Preface, page xxxi.)

To Trow. To think ; to imagine.

U.

VAIR. A gray and white fur. (See note to 'Aucassin and Nicolette,' verse 271.)

VALET. A young man of gentle blood, not yet knighted. (See Preface, page xix. Note to 'Aucassin and Nicolette,' verse 489 ; and to 'the Vale of False Lovers,' verse 1.)

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| VILLAIN. | } Terms originally applicable to persons attached to land as slaves ; or holding land on condition of performing servile offices in husbandry : hence used to signify any thing of a character opposite to learning, courtesy, and knighthood. (See note to 'the Priest who had a Mother in spite of himself,' verse 124.) |
| VILLAINOUS. | |
| VILLAINY. | |

UNWEETING. Ignorant ; unknowing.

W.

WAIL. Audible sorrow.

WAN. (*old past tense of to WIN.*) Won.

WARD. Guard.

WARDER. A keeper.

WEED. A garment ; clothes.

To WEEN. To think ; to imagine.

To WEET.

To WIT.

To WOT.

} To know.

WEETLESS. Unknowing.

WEFT. Any thing of which the claim is generally *waved*.

WELKIN. The visible regions of the air.

To WEND. To go. (*old present tense of WENT.*)

WESTERING. Passing to the west.

WHILERE. A little while ago.

WHIT. *Substantive.* A point ; a jot.

WIGHT. A person.

To WIS. To think ; to imagine.

WIST. (Wissed.) *Past tense of to wis.*—Thought ; imagined.

WISTFUL. Full of thought ; attentive.

WIT. Intellect ; the powers of the mind.

WO-BEGONE. Lost in wo.

WON. *Substantive.* A dwelling.

To WON. To dwell.

WOOD. Mad ; furious.

WO WORTH. Wo befall. (from *pyrd*, Fate : *peorðan*, to be. Anglo-Saxon.)

WOX. Grew. (*Past tense of to wax.*)

To WRAY. To discover ; to show ; to divulge. (See to BE-WRAY.)

WROUGHT. Caused ; effected. Worked.

Y.

Y-BROUGHT. Brought. — The *y* is a corruption of the Saxon *le*. It has apparently no effect on the sense of a word.

Y-CLEP'D. Called ; named.

Of YORE. Of old time ; long ago.

THE END.

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